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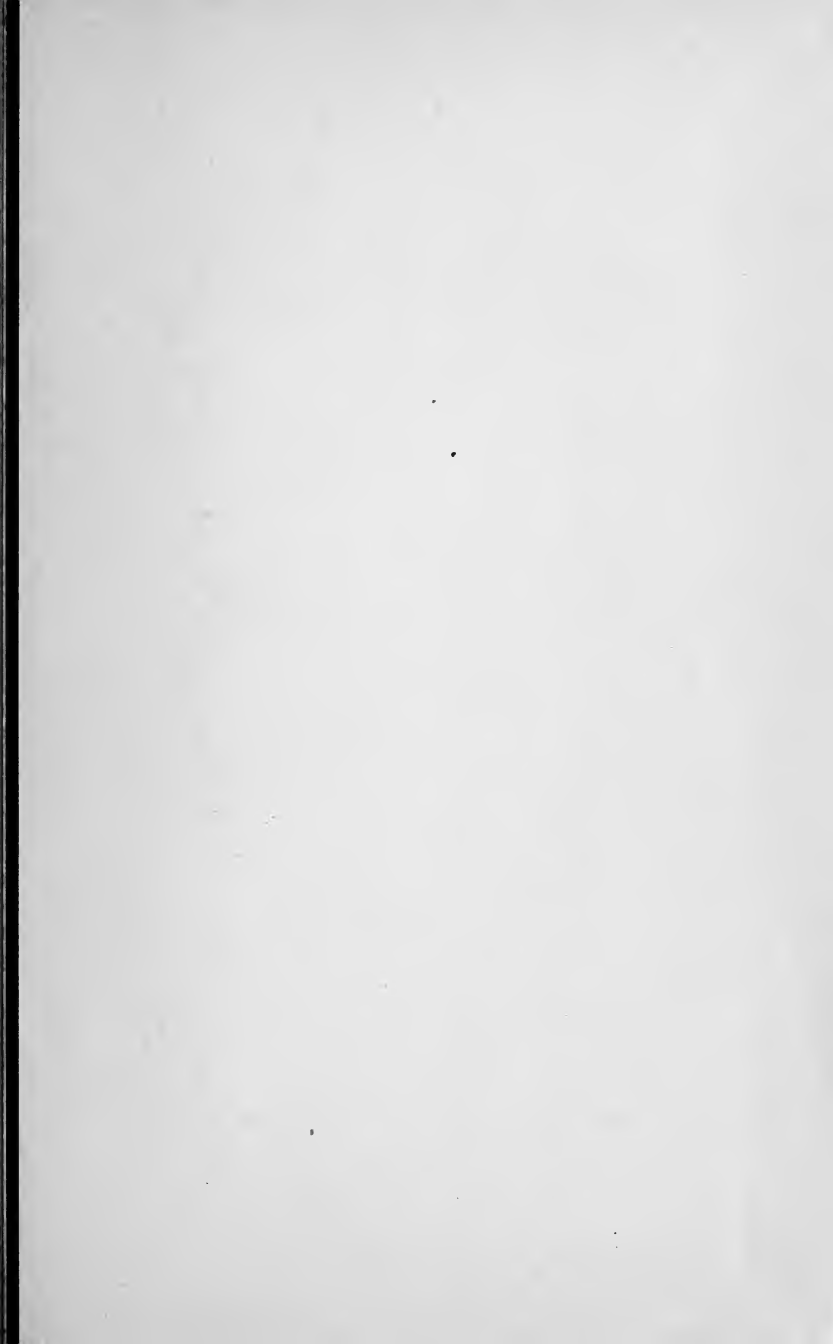
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DANTE

538
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A DRAMA
IN TWO TABLEAUX AND SIX ACTS

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BY

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DANTE



CHARACTERS.

- DANTE (Alighieri) The Great Italian Poet.
(Guido) CAVALCANTI. A Poet and Patron of
Dante, about ten years
older than he; a Lead-
er of the White Fac-
tion.
- CINO (a Pistoja) A Poet and Friend of
Dante; but somewhat
younger than he; a
Member of the White
Faction.
- DINO (Frescobaldi) A Poet and Friend of
Dante, about the same
age as he; a Member
of the White Faction.
- (Cosmo) DONATI The Leader of the Black
Faction, and Dante's
Enemy.
- SIMONE (Donati) Son of Cosmo Donati,
and Dante's Enemy.
- (Brunetto) LATINI An aged Teacher of
Florence, much re-
spected by Dante and
his Friends.

BEATRICE (Portina) A Young Maiden, greatly beloved by Dante.

GEMMA (Donati) A Young Maiden, Niece of Cosmo Donati, who became Dante's Wife.

BACCHINA A Young Maiden, a companion of Beatrice and Gemma.

MARQUIS OF MALASPINA in Lunigiana, a Protector of Dante in exile.

WAITRESS, PRIEST, MONK, MESSENGERS, ATTENDANTS, YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS, and ADHERENTS of the White and Black Factions.

Place and Time, Florence and Italy in the Fourteenth Century.

DANTE.

OPENING TABLEAU.

The Piazza di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy. Backing is the Church of Santa Croce. In front of it are the beginnings of a Pedestal. On the highest part of the Pedestal, accompanied by others below her, with whom she is playing, is a young girl (BEATRICE) dressed in a dark crimson frock. Below, on the pavement gazing at her, stands a school boy (DANTE), who seems to have been suddenly arrested and charmed by her appearance.¹

ACT FIRST.

SCENE:—*A public Square or Garden in Florence, arranged for a Fete, as on St. John's Day, when, to quote from Federn's Dante, "the young men clad in white led by the Senior d'Amour, went singing and dancing up the street of Santa Felicita; and women and girls, also in wreaths of flowers, partook in the festivities; and music and song and ringing bells filled the air with joyful sounds."* Backing at the Right, a bench; at the Left front a booth arranged for the fete. In it is a table on which are flowers, apparently for sale, also at least one bottle of wine and three glasses.

The curtain rising discloses, at the back centre, DANTE, CINO, CAVALCANTI, and DINO, surrounding LATINI. DANTE has a note-book and pencil in his hand.² CINO, CAVALCANTI and DINO hold manuscripts, which can be easily carried in their pockets. Behind the table, stands a matron serving as a Waitress in the fete.

LATINI. A poet like a poem is a product.

CINO. I thought him born, not made.

LATINI. And why not both?

Let nature frame a man to feel. He thinks
Of what he feels. He feels what touches him.
The substance of his thought and feeling then
Is what experience has brought near to him.

CINO. But men term youth poetic.

LATINI. Rightly too.

The freshest fires are brightest. But our
thoughts,
How e'er they burn and melt, not often flow
To moulds of nature's rarest imagery,
Till life has been well sought to find and store
it.

CINO. Then youth should wait for age, and grow
apace,

And try no more.

LATINI. O no; it is our trying
That turns the latch-key of experience
Whose doors swing inward quite as oft as
outward.

*Enter—Left—Several Pairs of dancing YOUNG
MEN AND MAIDENS. They sing:*

How green the grove and blue the sky!
How gold and red the hedges!
How thrills the breeze with trills on high,
That breathe the season's pledges!
For, O, the spring, in all its prime,
Has brought the bird its mating time.

Exeunt—Right—DANCERS.

*Enter—Left—GEMMA and BACCHINA, and
between them BEATRICE.³ The three
walk arm in arm, and exchange bows
with the Gentlemen, BEATRICE taking
especial notice of DANTE.*

CINO (*to DANTE, as he looks toward the three*).
A trinity appropriate for St. John's day!

DINO. The poet's graces!

CINO (*moving toward the three*).

And the poet's models.
They bring us dies, when our ideas glow,
To leave their impress and remain ideals.

DANTE *sits apart by himself on the Bench alternately writing in the note-book that he holds, and listening to the conversation of the others.*⁶

BEATRICE (*to LATINI*). We come to tender you our morning greeting.

CAVALCANTI (*to DINO*). Nor could the tender come more tenderly.

LATINI (*shaking hands with the three young women*). I thank you.

BACCHINA (*turning to DINO*). Will you recommend me now?

DINO. For what?

BACCHINA. Why, if a king's touch cure
king's evil,
A master's touch should cure the master's evil.

DINO. And what is that?

BACCHINA (*looking toward LATINI*). All evil in
the world,
To him, is lack of culture.

DINO. So you seek
To come in touch with him?

BACCHINA (*laughingly*). And with his pupi's.
(*Giving her hand to DINO. Both join in the
dance that follows.*)

*Enter—Right—Pairs of Dancing YOUNG MEN
and MAIDENS. They Sing:*

How keen the glance, and bright the flush!
How sense the soul resembles!
How throbs the heart that heed would hush
Through lips where music trembles!
For, O, the spring of round and rhyme
Has brought mankind its mating-time!

Exeunt—Left—DANCERS.

Enter—Left—DONATI.

CINO and DINO talk with GEMMA and BACCHINA.

CAVALCANTI (*to BEATRICE*). You heard what
Cino said. It all was true.

The hands of beauty when they touch and thrill
us

All leave their imprint on ideas, and thus
We get ideals.

BEATRICE (*laughingly*). You poets wing your
words

Without the least conception where they wend,
Like birds with broken feet that keep on flying
From simple inability to perch.

DONATI. Ha, ha!

CAVALCANTI (*to DONATI*). You heard her then?

DONATI. I overheard.

CAVALCANTI (*aside to DINO*).

Is always overing something, if he can be.

DONATI (*to BEATRICE*). Well said, Miss Beatrice! These flighty minds
That cut connection with the world's demands
Are sure to have a limping time of it,
If ever they get down to useful work.

(*BEATRICE laughs and bows, then joins GEMMA and BACCHINA at the Left where all three seem to be helping the Matron who has charge of the Table. DINO sits on the bench beside DANTE. They exchange, and, apparently in a friendly way, criticise each other's writings*).⁴

CAVALCANTI (*replying to DONATI's last remark*).
They may prove useful without getting down
As far as—⁵

DONATI. Useful as the splash and spray
Above the waterfall that works my mill.

CAVALCANTI. They play a necessary part.

DONATI. You own.
They play?

CAVALCANTI. And play is necessary too.
Our thoughts are children that must play to
grow.

DONATI. Say children that when called to work
must whine.

These brains that bellow so about their pains,
Prove mainly their own lack of brawn to bear
them.

CAVALCANTI. At least, they lead a peaceful life,
not so?—

And that is better than a life of brawls.

DONATI. Who lead a life of brawls?

CAVALCANTI. I did not say;
But many a night in Florence is termed black.

DONATI. And many a coward's face is well
termed white.

CAVALCANTI (*drawing a sword which DONATI
also does*).

Now by my sword!

CINO. Nay, nay; but by your sense.
What fevers both of you is no disease
That can be cured by surgery.

CAVALCANTI. By what then?

CINO (*pointing to the table, and rapidly filling
three glasses from the bottle*).

By stimulants. Accurse to cutting down,
When one can gulp down! Save your health
for me,

And, while you sheathe your swords, pledge
gratitude

For such delightful ways of sheathing spirits.

(DONATI and CAVALCANTI *sheathe their swords and drink with CINO*).

Exeunt—Left—CAVALCANTI, DONATI and CINO with glasses in hand, followed by the Waitress carrying the bottle.

(DINO, *when he sees them, excusing himself to DANTE, rises and follows them.*)

Exit—Left—DINO.

GEMMA (*to BEATRICE, looking toward the Left*).
Ha, ha!

BEATRICE. What set you laughing?

GEMMA. Why, to think
My uncle's words could turn a poet's thought
Out of his own conceit—humph!—long enough
To take in the conception of another.

BEATRICE. You like not poets then?

BACCHINA. They like not her.

GEMMA. They might, if they could see me. What
they see
Is never in the thing at which they look;
But, like a halo when it rings the moon,
All in the clouds, and drawn there by them-
selves.

BEATRICE. Break through the halo, you might
find them out.

BACCHINA. Or else be found out by them.

GEMMA. That is it;
And by-and-by come tumbling from the heights
Where they, not we, have put us,—in a realm
Where pebbles all seem palaces, and mounds all
mounts
And clouds all continents, and moons have
faces,
And all the littlest stars that prick the sky
Are spear-points of some huge hobgoblin.

BEATRICE. To think things larger may enlarge
one's thought.

GEMMA. To think things true when false may
prove all false.

BEATRICE. Who think the poets' fancies true?
Their brains,
Like helmets when their metal is the best,
Receive the light of life and flash it back.
None take the flash for fire.

GEMMA. I see you like
A fancy, flashing fellow!—I the grave
And thoughtful.

BEATRICE. Fancy is the flower of thought.
The more of life there is, the more of flower:
The more of thought there is, the more of
fancy.

A bear, you know, has hair upon his cheek.
And growls, and, now and then, stands up and
hugs.

I like men who can prove themselves no brutes.

(DANTE *sits staring at BEATRICE.*)

Enter—Lcft—DONATI.

DONATI (*noticing DANTE and addressing him*).
Why, Dante, you here?⁶

DANTE (*rising in embarrassment*). Yes.

DONATI (*shaking hands with DANTE*). Good
day.

GEMMA (*aside to BEATRICE and BACCHINA*).
His "yes"

Outsnubs the backset of a tutor's "no",—
Forbids all further effort at expression.

DONATI (*to DANTE and gesturing toward the
YOUNG WOMEN*).

You know these ladies, do you not?

DANTE (*bowing awkwardly*). Yes, yes.⁷

DONATI. What book is that you hold so close in
hand?

(DANTE *closes his note-book, and puts it inside
his cloak.*)

A secret?

DANTE (*bowing awkwardly*). Yes.

Exit—Right—DONATI, laughing.

Enter—Left—CINO.

(CINO and DANTE sit on the bench and exchange writings.⁴)

GEMMA (*to YOUNG WOMEN at the Left, and referring to DANTE'S Book.*)

His own child, probably!

It flies to cover so much like himself.

He is a very interesting man.

BEATRICE. You think so?

GEMMA. To himself. When all
one's eyes

And ears are turned like his on his own person,
He bears about both audience and actor.

*Enter—Left—Several Pairs of Dancing YOUNG
MEN and MAIDENS. They sing:*

How framed in grace and phrased in song,

How homed in rapture real,

How won to worth from earth and wrong

Is love when once ideal!

For, O, the spring of life sublime

Has brought the spirit's mating-time!

Exeunt—Right—DANCERS.

Enter—Left—CAVALCANTI.

CAVALCANTI (*to BEATRICE*). My gentle maid,
Miss Beatrice, not dancing?

BEATRICE. Not now, rough master Cavalcanti.

CAVALCANTI. Oh!

BEATRICE. Oh?—We must speak as we are
spoken to;

And if I be a maid and gentle also

You ought to be my master and be rough.

CAVALCANTI. Be rough?—Oh, never. I leave
that to Dante.

BEATRICE. I should think so!

CAVALCANTI. Wait, Miss Beatrice.

A man may double up his fist and frown,

And make fiend-faces merely at himself.

BEATRICE. Why so?

CAVALCANTI. Because that self asserts itself;

And he keeps fighting it to keep it down.

BEATRICE. That self must then be very strong.

CAVALCANTI. It is—

In Dante.

BEATRICE. Humph!—Is that what troubles him?

Enter—Right—DINO.

*CINO leaves DANTE and goes to meet DINO,
where standing at the Right they also
seem to criticise each other's manuscript.⁴*

CAVALCANTI. It is with you. You have such
awful eyes.

They hush him so his inward soul stops thinking ;

And then his outward mein plays pedagogue
And whips himself to make himself behave.

BEATRICE. A very strange man !

CAVALCANTI. You should not say that.
Just think how hot he must be in his heart
To make him warp and shrink up as he does
When you come near.

BEATRICE. He does not act that way
With others ?

CAVALCANTI. No.

BEATRICE. Some people act that way
With cats. Kind souls then shoo these off.

BEATRICE *joins* GEMMA and BACCHINA, and,
presently,

*Exeunt—Left—*GEMMA, BEATRICE and BAC-
CHINA.

DINO (*looking at the YOUNG WOMEN, to CINO*).

A poet has to pose, to prose himself
Sufficiently for some companionship.

CINO. To one who wed her, she would prove to
be

A pretty but a pert Lupatto-dog,
And snarl at all who did not master her.

DINO (*looking sharply at DANTE*).

But why does Dante gaze at Gemma so?
Finds her inspiring?—I would rather risk
Without a disenchanting yell or yolk,
Extracting teeth than thought from such a
mouth.

Exeunt—Right—CINO and DINO.

DANTE (*to CAVALCANTI, who has approached him*).

Say, Cavalcanti, did you hear those words?—
“Why does he gaze at Gemma?”—did you
hear?

Say, Cavalcanti, did you hear?—at Gemma?
They must imagine—⁸

CAVALCANTI. Yes, they must imagine.
They never could have seen it with their eyes.

DANTE. Seen what?

CAVALCANTI. Now, Dante, I have made no
claim

To be your soul’s confessor; but you know
That I have guessed to whom you wrote your
verses;

And you have not denied it.—Was it Gemma?

DANTE. The next time that men watch me, they
shall think so.⁸

CAVALCANTI. And why?

DANTE. No doubt, no thought! What men
conceive

They comprehend, they cease to guess about.

CAVALCANTI. Would you deceive them?

DANTE. What men have no right
To know, one has no right to let them know.
Because my soulless will had made me brute,
And kept me staring like a pointer-cur
As if to turn to prey the very one
I most revere, must then my voice, forsooth,
Bark out an insult in the same direction?

CAVALCANTI. I did not say that, boy; but it were
strange

To see you start to play the very game
That you blame me for.

DANTE. Nay, I should not say
My love sought more than one.

CAVALCANTI. Nor I, you know—
Were it not true.

DANTE. Oh, fickle Cavalcanti!

CAVALCANTI. Why, humming bees may sip the
sweets they need
From every flower; and why not humming
poets?

DANTE. They were not made to sting, nor souls
for stinging.

The poets are not lesser men but greater.
And so should find unworthy of themselves
A word or deed that makes them seem less
worthy.

A man should court but one, and marry her.

CAVALCANTI. And mar the lives of all he does
not marry?

DANTE. Nay, nay; be true to one, and let the
church—

CAVALCANTI. The church can but confirm a fact
that is,—⁹

A love that lives already in the soul.
Not outside hands, though reaching down
from heaven,
Can push inside of it what is not there.
Nor keep it inside, would it then pass out.
You deem it wise or good, humane or Godly,
To doom a boy for one mistake in mating
To everlasting punishment on earth?

*Enter—Left—*GEMMA.

Ah, Mistress Gemma, Master Dante here
Was looking at you, so that I rebuked him.

GEMMA. Was looking—and at what?

CAVALCANTI. Why, I should say
Your ribbons—things that he could tye to.

DANTE.

Oh!

CAVALCANTI. Why that was what we just were talking of,—

A something on the earth, and it wears ribbons,

That one can tie to.

GEMMA. Making free, I think,
With my own ribbons!

CAVALCANTI. No, no; making them
So they would not be free.

GEMMA. Yes, they might choke me.

DANTE. And what a pity that would be!

GEMMA. Why so?

DANTE. These choking throats make faces red.

GEMMA. Make red?

DANTE. Yes; yours I never yet saw *red*. It seemed

A readless riddle.

GEMMA. It could riddle you.

DANTE. Oh, no; you would not judge enough
was in me

To justify the jog. Why tap a void?

Enter—Left—BEATRICE.

CAVALCANTI goes to her. DANTE, standing
at the right with his back to the Left, does
not see her.

GEMMA (*to DANTE*). You may be right,—more right than you suppose.

DANTE. More right than I suppose?—It is not often

One does me so much honor.

(*They continue talking at the Left.*)

BEATRICE (*to CAVALCANTI, while she stands at the Right looking at DANTE*).

Yes, I read

The song you say that Dante wrote about me.

But were he truthful, did he feel it all,

It were but natural for him to speak

To me.

CAVALCANTI. He is an artist.

BEATRICE.

What of that?

CAVALCANTI. You know there were no art, were there no forms

Of nature in which art could frame its tribute.

But many an artist, for this reason, fears

To emphasize the part he finds in nature

Lest it outdo the part he finds in self;

So often that which seems most natural

The one thing is that he will not let seem so.

BEATRICE (*looking toward GEMMA*).

How smitten he is with her!¹⁸

CAVALCANTI. Whom—with Gemma?

BEATRICE. Of course.

CAVALCANTI. You think so?

BEATRICE. See him hold
her hand.

CAVALCANTI. If your hand were where hers is,
I believe

His own would tremble so he could but drop it.

GEMMA (*to DANTE, while he takes her hand as if
to bid Good-bye*).

But had I no imagination?

DANTE. Then,

I could not see my image in you, could I?

And if—to quote you—I but think of self,

You could not make me think of anything.

GEMMA. I could not help you much then?

*Exit—Left—*BEATRICE.

DANTE. No; not if

Myself be what I think.

(GEMMA and DANTE bow to each other.)

*Exit—Right—*GEMMA.

(DANTE takes his note-book from his pocket, and
begins to write.)

CAVALCANTI (*approaching, and laying his hand
on DANTE'S shoulder*).

What are you doing?

DANTE. Am writing.

CAVALCANTI. Yes, I saw that.—Writing
what?

DANTE. What comes to me.¹⁰

CAVALCANTI (*with a gesture toward the Right*).
From her?

DANTE. Yes, partly so ;
And partly from myself.

CAVALCANTI. You write it down
To save it?

DANTE. Yes, and save myself. You know
That writing is my mission.¹⁰

CAVALCANTI. What was that
Which she suggested?

DANTE (*after hesitating a moment*). Why,
some minds that try

To be in touch with ours but tickle them ;

Or vex an itching that can merely fret us.

Withal, too, they but scratch the brain's out-
side ;

And then, as if they took the hair for thought,
Exhibit this, when tossed and puffed, as prov-
ing

How they themselves have thus our brain de-
veloped.

CAVALCANTI (*laughing heartily, then taking from his pocket a manuscript poem*).

No touch like that though, led you to write this,¹¹

Why is it, boy, you hold your love so secret?

DANTE. Had you a glimpse of God like no one else's

You would not speak of it?

CAVALCANTI.

Why not?

DANTE.

It might

Subject Him to the insult—might it not?—

Of human doubt?

CAVALCANTI. You are a strange soul, Dante.

DANTE. You think my verses good?

CAVALCANTI.

Both good and bad.

DANTE. Why bad?

CAVALCANTI.

Oh, not so fierce! Not you are bad;

And not your verses when they come from you.

DANTE. From whom else could they come?

CAVALCANTI.

I seem to hear

The echoes through them of your masters.

DANTE.

Good ones!

CAVALCANTI. Good masters give us methods but not models.

You write as one who rests in a ravine
Recording but what others have beheld
Above where he dare venture.

DANTE. You would have me?—

CAVALCANTI. Climb up, or soar—

DANTE. But how?

CAVALCANTI. The spirit's wings
Are grown, not given, unfold within oneself.
But you—you get both word and thought from
others.

DANTE. You mean my Latin?

CAVALCANTI. Yes, I mean your Latin.¹²

DANTE. The words of Virgil and the Christian Church.—

The thoughts that live like spirits in the words,
And save our thought through what they there
incarnate!

CAVALCANTI. The thought they save should be
your own, my Dante.

Are you a Roman? You should be Italian.¹²

With theme and language fitted for Italians.

To lift the lives of common men, it is,

That poems make the common seem uncommon,

Their richest boon, believe me, that which brings

To him who reads an inward consciousness
Of oneness with the spirit that indites them,
And its own oneness with the loftiest spirit.

DANTE. The poet's tool is his poetic tongue.

CAVALCANTI. 'Tis not the tongue that makes
the bell ring sweet;
It is the metal of the bell itself.

Enter—Left—MESSENGER.

(to MESSENGER).

Good day. You seem excited.

MESSENGER. Yes, I am.

Will never fate decree a time of rest
For Florence?

CAVALCANTI. Not while wide awake! What now?

MESSENGER. A courier has just come speed-
ing in.

He says the Ghibbelines take arms again,¹³
Have fresh recruits enlisted at Arezzo,
Have fortified the castle at Caprona,
And gather now in force at Campaldino.

DANTE. And we do nothing?

MESSENGER. Yes, Donati's blacks
Like flocks of feeding crows we pelt with peb-
bles

Are flying all to saddle.

DANTE. We should follow.

CAVALCANTI. And follow him?—no, no.⁵

DANTE. Not follow him?—

Not that great fighter?

CAVALCANTI. What?—you call him
great?—

Mere bluffer of some baby brawls in Florence?—

The flimsiest nerve can fret to feel a flea.

DANTE. But those who fight when no one needs
to fight——

CAVALCANTI. Are foes to public order.¹⁶ Why,
you seem

To deem all people patriots like yourself.

A little rill just starting from a spring

Could not be quite so gushing fresh as you are!

I love you, boy; but when the rill has rubbed

A little more of soil from both its banks

'Twill have more substance if not quite

So much transparency.

*Enter—Left Upper—*BEATRICE, GEMMA *and*
BACCHINA.

*Unseen by DANTE, they busy themselves with
the flowers on the table.*

DANTE. Yet, Cavalcanti,

There is but one thing now for us to do.

Do two things, and we do the thing they
plan,—

To fight both black and white, and each time
half

Our full defense. Now who remembers fac-
tion

Forgets his Florence.

CAVALCANTI.

True!—and you would

fight?

DANTE. For right to serve the church and
Italy?—

Fight those whose flags all fly to signal
traitors?—

Fight those who all, like base train-bearers,
come

To smother down the freedom of the city
Beneath an emperor's cloak whose utmost edge
Is fringed with bleeding spears?—Were I a
moth

In a rug their crowd came trampling, I should
fight—

Ay, with my mouth, too, as you seem to ask—
And keep on fighting, too, until I wrought
My way to something that could not be tram-
pled.

CAVALCANTI. All right, boy, you shall have your
chance. We go.

*Exeunt—Right—*CAVALCANTI, DANTE and MES-
SENGER.

Enter—Left—LATINI, CINO and DINO.

BEATRICE (*referring to DANTE'S words that all have evidently overheard*).

And that is Dante!

LATINI. Yes, the actual Dante.

BEATRICE. His words and ways have seemed so
void of grace,
To say not grit!

LATINI. In temperaments like his
The form is but the signal of the spirit.
We never judge a flag by gawky flops
Against a wind-forsaken pole; but by
Its flying when it feels the breath of heaven.

BEATRICE. He seemed a woman; now he seems
all man.

LATINI. And both are fit in one ordained to be
A representative of all things human.
If he by nature be a poet, then
He should by nature be in substance that
Which art demands of him in semblance.

DINO. Cino,
We should go home.

CINO. What for?

DINO. To put on kilts,
And shown ourselves half women.

LATINI. Nay, without that,
 My Dino, you can prove your womanhood;
 For who but women take all words to heart,
 And think each point we make must point to-
 ward them?

*Exeunt—Right—*LATINI, CINO *and* DINO.

GEMMA. He may be right; but men half done,
 like eggs
 Half boiled, are very soft. I much prefer
 To have them hard.

BACCHINA. How strange!

GEMMA. Why strange?

BACCHINA. Because
 I thought we always liked our opposites.¹⁴

BEATRICE. You mean?

GEMMA. Ay, you do well to call her
 mean.

If when we walk, we bring our weeds with us,
 We cannot hope our air to smell of roses.

BACCHINA. Aha! Humph!—That explains it!

GEMMA. What?

BACCHINA. The way
 You take in breath (*tossing up her head and
 nose*).

GEMMA. Look up, not down, eh?—I
 Would rather snatch at birds than dig for
 worms.

BACCHINA. Have pity, Gemma! Shell your thoughts before

You fling them at us—are so hard to crack!

You surely would not have them crack our skulls?

GEMMA. Crack moulds of jelly! Your skulls were more soft

Than that to be indented by a Dante.

Enter—Right—CAVALCANTI and DANTE.

The YOUNG WOMEN are at the Left, and do not notice their hearers.

BEATRICE. A steed we drive, a stream that floods its banks,

Has not less force because its gait is gentle.

Had you but heard his call a moment since

To Cavalcanti who behind him leads

The half of Florence! 'Twas a call as brave

As ever yet were eagles when their beaks

Tear out the hearts from wild beasts twice their size

That come to steal the young within their nests.

While BEATRICE is speaking DANTE takes out his note-book and writes.

Excunt—Left BACCHINA, GEMMA and BEATRICE.

DANTE (*to CAVALCANTI, referring to BEATRICE's words*).

Ah, Cavalcanti, should my sword not save
The soul within me, when the strife comes on,
No welcome could await in realms beyond
So sweet, so sacred, as I just have heard!¹⁵

CAVALCANTI. Stay here, boy, stay! To make a
worthy fight,

A man should put his heart in what he does.

Your heart is lost. It will be left behind you.

DANTE. There, there, again, you will not under-
stand me.

CAVALCANTI. Now Dante!

DANTE. Yes, you think my heart would stay
When she it is has flung it toward the fight.

What love I have, inspires me in my soul;

And, like the soul, it must express itself

Through every fibre binding me to life;

And like the soul, too, I believe it comes

From some far realm divine to make divine
Myself, my world, and all that dwell in it.

A man who feels like this, and would not fight
For church and state and home, would be a
devil.

CAVALCANTI. And how long, think you, in this
world of ours

That you can feel like that?

DANTE. As long as love
Like what I have inspires me.

CAVALCANTI.

Should it fail?

DANTE. Then you nor anyone could longer find
In me a friend. All any life is worth
Lies in its possibilities of love.

CAVALCANTI. But were love's object lost?—

DANTE.

One cannot lose

What is eternal. Hearts must always keep
If not their love, what love has made of them.

*Enter—Right—The YOUNG MEN AND MAID-
ENS who were the Dancers in the earlier
part of this Act; but the MEN are equipped
for battle and walk seriously and the
MAIDENS follow them with every indica-
tion of anxiety. CAVALCANTI and DANTE,
putting his note-book in his pocket, join
them.*

Exeunt—Left—OMNES.

CURTAIN.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE: *Same as in Act First, but not arranged for a Fete. The curtain rising discloses LATINI, CINO, DINO and other citizens of Florence, also WOMEN.*

Enter—Left—CAVALCANTI.

LATINI (*shaking hands with CAVALCANTI*).

And so you have returned victorious.

DINO. Thanks to Donati!

CAVALCANTI. Thanks to him, I fear.

DINO. Why fear it?

CAVALCANTI. One should always fear the
hand

That taps a leaking jail to flood its faction.¹⁶
Who breaks one law may live to break another.
This very latest victory was gained
Against the orders on our side, as well
As ordinance of those upon the other.

DINO. So much the stronger he!

LATINI. Beware of strength
That, like the brute's, is wielded not by reason.
Except by reason thought was never forced
For its own good.

DINO. But if, in some just cause?—

LATINI. In lands where law supports the right,
to seek

To rise by breaking legal barriers
Is worse than climbing up a dizzy stair
By leaning on a broken bannister.

DINO. You may be right; but few will think you
so.

The man who tramples on his country's foes
Treads upward toward a height, however
gained,

Where all his countrymen look up to him.

CINO. And now but one can rival him.

LATINI That one?

CINO. Is Dante.

LATINI. Dante?

CINO. Yes, our Dante! Oh,
You should have seen him when the battle
came.

He led the last charge, speeding on a steed¹⁷
Well nigh as white as was the air it slid
through,

His form bent down as if to hurl his head
Against their lines, and, by sheer force of
brain,

Burst through them. Faster than the follow-
ing wind

He flew, as if the blast that urged him on
Were some last trump of Gabriel's, and the
soul

Could fear no ills, for it had passed beyond
them.

(looking toward the Left).

I think him coming now.

LATINI.

He is.

DINO.

And with him

Comes Donati.

CINO.

Watching well the man

That brought him victory.

CAVALCANTI.

Too well, I fear!

You give to one who never gives to others,

He first will recognize you as a dupe,

And then prepare to treat you as a prey.

DINO. They fought for Florence.

CAVALCANTI.

Dante, not Donati.

He fights that all may follow his own standard.

*Enter—Left—DANTE, DONATI, SIMONE and
OTHERS of the Blacks.*

PEOPLE. Hurrah for Dante!

DANTE.

Nay, nay; say Donati.

A CITIZEN. The charge that clove their line for
us was yours.

DANTE. Praise not the spear that split the foe-
men's mail,
But praise the brain whence came the skill
that aimed it.

DANTE *shakes hands at the Right with LA-
TINI, CINO, DINO and OTHERS, then takes
out his note-book and begins to write, and,
after a while, to talk with CAVALCANTI.*

Exeunt—Right—LATINI, CINO and DINO.

SIMONI (*to DONATI, at extreme Left, and refer-
ring to DANTE's words*).

Well said!

DONATI. It was. That soft thing termed a
sponge
Will always hug you, when in touch with it.
But no one finds the least impression left
When you are not in touch with it.

SIMONE. I see.

You think then that he fears you in your pres-
ence.

DONATI. I think he may not fear me in my ab-
sence.

SIMONE. You doubt him?

DONATI. When I choose a fol-
lower,
My standard must be followed,—not his own.

He lets his own thought lead him; and you
know

Men led by thought are often led to doubt.

SIMONE. One thinking follower might make
men believe

Your other followers were controlled by
thought.

DONATI (*laughingly*). You think a thug could
ever pose as thinker?

Enter—Left—GEMMA and BACCHINA and another WOMAN.

GEMMA (*to DONATI, and looking toward DANTE*).

And is it true he led the charge?

DONATI. They say so.

A brave man, Gemma! but, of course, you
know it;

Has dared to press a suit with you, I hear.

(GEMMA *nods*.)

A hero, yes! You might not go amiss—

I mean remain a Miss—had he his way.

(GEMMA *turns toward DANTE*. DONATI *continues to SIMONE*.)

If made a member of our family,

He might prove ours in all things. Few have
brains

Too cool and clear to feel a rise in blood
And not be fevered and confused by it.
No poison paralyzes thought like pride;
No pride as poisonous as family pride.

BACCHINA (*to GEMMA, and looking toward DANTE*).

Oh, one could give a world of common men
For just an armful of a man like that!

OTHER WOMAN. He must have trained his eyes
when he was flying.

They look as deep down through one as an
eagle's,

Ay, not as if belonging to the senses
But to the soul!

GEMMA. You think so?

OTHER WOMAN. Think so?—Yes.

How broad his chest is!—Look!—and how it
heaves!

Hard work, I think, but thrilling work as well,
To keep inside of it a spirit grand
As his!

BACCHINA. Note you his graceful limbs, and
how

He poises at the waist, as if about
To leap to some fair realm of beauty which
His flesh enrobes but cannot realize!

CAVALCANTI (*to DANTE at the extreme Right*).

One whose position lifts him where the crowd
Look up to him should never use the station
To drag up low down brutes like this Donati.

DANTE. I only spoke the truth.

CAVALCANTI. Cook soup for swine!

They leave you, if they fail to find it swill;
Or else, in greed to get it, trip and tramp you.
They harm you for your help; yet still stay
swine.

DANTE. But surely, I meant right.

CAVALCANTI. Perhaps you did;

But when we find men claiming they meant
right,

We find most others claiming they went wrong.

DANTE. You doubt me?

CAVALCANTI. It were hard not doubting one

Who turns against his own.

DANTE. You mean?

CAVALCANTI. I mean

Exactly what I say. A little black,
If mixed with white, may soil the white as
much

As all black would.

DANTE. Yourself had been all black,
And lost for Florence all its liberty,

Had I myself not urged you to the fight.
'Tis only justice, gratitude, to own it.

CAVALCANTI. Unjust, ungrateful, am I?—What
are you

To fling these taunts at one who merely seeks
To snatch you from the foils of your own
folly.

The world you think in is a world of fancy.
The world all live in is a world of fact.

Exit—Right—CAVALCANTI.

(DANTE *looks after him, then takes out his note-
book and seats himself on the bench.*)

DONATI (*to SIMONE, and looking toward DANTE
and CAVALCANTI*).

They must have quarreled.

SIMONE. Yes, it looks like that.

DONATI. It does; and, when our enemies fall out,
'Tis time that we ourselves fall in. For then
They fight for their own cause with half their
force,

And with the other half they fight for us.

SIMONE. I judge 'twas Cavalcanti's jealousy
That caused the jar.

DONATI. And their twin poet-natures.
When minds are filled so full of light conceits,
Clipped off like chippings from substantial
concepts,

They store fit kindling-wood, when comes a friction,

To burst in flame. You know I always hold
A dreaming man is not a dangerous foe;
For dreams portend their opposites. Just when
He wings his whims to heaven, he wakes in
hell.

Ay, ay, a foe deficient in his brain
Is quicker vanquished than if so in body;
For he whose reason fails him in the fray
Fights like a knight unbuckling his own mail.

Exeunt—Left—DONATI and SIMONE.

(GEMMA and BACCHINA who have been at the
Left approach DANTE.)

BACCHINA (*to DANTE*). You know how all are
talking of you? Oh,

Your ears must flame!

DANTE (*rising and putting his note-book in his
pocket*). If flaming high enough,

I might then look like Moses.

BACCHINA.

But suppose

They talked against you?

DANTE.

I would act like him.

BACCHINA. Be meek?

DANTE.

Oh, yes; as meek as he was when

He took down Aaron's calf.

BACCHINA. Whose calf is here?

DANTE. Why theirs who rather would look back
to Egypt

Than forward to a promised land.

GEMMA. You mean
The poet's land?

DANTE. It might mean that to you.

BACCHINA. Why not?—The poet's is the prom-
ised land,—

Is always promised, but it never comes.

GEMMA. Some think that he would fly to it.

DANTE. Why not?

Some minds would walk and some would fly.
You fear

That those who fly all fail to leave a foot-
print?

GEMMA. You seem despondent. You have quar-
reled—eh?—

With Cavalcanti?

DANTE. We exchanged some words.

BACCHINA. And flung them hard to make them
hurt the thing

They hit, not so?—They made your faces red.

DANTE. The day is warm—and pleasant.

BACCHINA *laughs and turns away.*

Exit—Right—BACCHINA and OTHER WOMAN.

GEMMA. Should be; yes—
For one like you, whom it has proved a hero.

DANTE. A hero?

GEMMA. That is what the whole town says.

DANTE. I did but do my duty.

GEMMA. That is what
But very few do. It gave you your chance.

DANTE. So pigmies, did one plod with them,
might give

A little common man a chance of greatness.

GEMMA. Of course.

DANTE. Well, I would rather work with
giants.

GEMMA. Why?

DANTE. They could lift me up above myself.

GEMMA. But you—you do not need that.

DANTE. Not?—Not I?—

When I am lingering here to learn from you?

GEMMA. My uncle and the people—you have
heard them—

Would all give you an uplift.

DANTE. When the heart
Sinks deep as mine, touch deft enough to reach
it

Requires a single hand, not many.

GEMMA. You

Intend to flatter?

DANTE. Do I?

GEMMA. You appear

To question me.

DANTE. One never questions—does he?—

A thing in which he takes no interest?

*Enter—Left—CAVALCANTI and BEATRICE, and
stand watching them.*

GEMMA. I interest you then?

DANTE. Yes, all things do.

GEMMA. That holds no flattery.

DANTE. What?—to treat a maid

As if confounding her with all things?

GEMMA (*looking toward the Right*). There

My uncle comes. I think would speak to you.

Exeunt—Right—DANTE and GEMMA.

BEATRICE (*looking after them*). He seems attentive to her.

CAVALCANTI. Yes, and goes

To meet Donati.

BEATRICE. Is it she, or he,

That draws him toward the Blacks?

CAVALCANTI. No fish are
drawn

Except by hooks first baited to their taste.

BEATRICE. He has a taste then for your enemies?

CAVALCANTI. I do not know.

BEATRICE. You doubt him?

CAVALCANTI. No; I mourn him.

BEATRICE. You may be right. 'Tis hard to make him out.

CAVALCANTI. And harder, if you make him out, to say it.

At times, us men who think we understand him

He welcomes but like strangers pushing in
The front door of one's house before they knock.

BEATRICE. His poems plead with me, his lips with her.

His brain seems like a bat's at blazing noon
That works but to work out some inward whim
And aims at nothing.¹⁸

CAVALCANTI. Nay; it aims at all things.
Perhaps it might be wise to let him know
Your judgment of him.

BEATRICE. How could that be done?

CAVALCANTI. If when one come to pluck a rose,
he finds

It grows on thorns, he may become more cautious.

BEATRICE. Would that be friendly?

CAVALCANTI. Are our foremost
friends

The ones who first forget our faults, or fail
Of effort to correct them?

BEATRICE. Did we turn
Our preferences to pedagogues, and school
The souls that came to us for sympathy,
Though best of friends, we might seem worst
of foes.

Enter—Right—DANTE followed by CINO.

CAVALCANTI. We quarreled lately. Notice me
ignore him.

(CAVALCANTI and BEATRICE pass DANTE
without bowing to him. DANTE sits in
distress on the bench, and takes out his
note-book.¹⁹)

Exeunt—Right—CAVALCANTI and BEATRICE.

CINO (to DANTE). What is it?

DANTE. Why, you saw! They
were my friends.

Oh what a world is this for souls to live in!—
For spirits whose one deepest wish it is
To think at one with others like themselves,
And all together think one thought of God!

But here one knows no wishes not imprisoned
Where all the implements to set him free
Are but these clumsy tools of breath and
brawn.

CINO. Some understand us.

DANTE. You, perhaps, not me!—
My soul is but an alien on the earth,
And alien most to this brute frame that holds,
Nor lets me say or do the thing I would.
So what I like not, it attracts to me;
And what I like and love, it drives away.

CINO. This on the day the people cheered you so?

DANTE. You think I craved their cheering? No,
not that.

I only want the best I have within
To be made better and believed, and then
Received by those about me.

CINO. They all know
How you have fought for Florence.

DANTE. Do they know
How I would have them live, so none should
need
To fight for her? Think you 'tis by the sword
That one can set a soul, while living, free?
Ay, not by deeds but dreaming does the spirit,
Itself uplifted, lift up those about it.

CINO. So you remain a poet!

DANTE.

I remain

What heaven has made me.

CINO.

Does it come from

heaven?

DANTE. It comes from all in life that is worth living.

*Enter—Left—Two MESSENGERS from the
BLACKS.*

Enter—Right—A MESSENGER from the WHITES.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS (*to DANTE, who rises*). Donati and the leaders of the Blacks

Will dine to-night at Carpi's. They await you.

MESSENGER FROM WHITES (*to DANTE*). And

Cavalcanti and the Whites will dine

At Rondinelli's. They await you, too.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS. Our invitation was the first.

MESSENGER FROM WHITES.

And mine

The best.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS (*drawing sword*).

Then prove it.

(*The other MESSENGER FROM BLACKS also draws his sword*).

MESSENGER FROM WHITES (*drawing sword*).

You are two to one;

And that is one too many.

DANTE (*drawing his sword to separate them*).

Here, fight fair!

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS. You think your own
fair play—against my side
And back?

DANTE. I would not harm you. I would
keep

You both from harming one another.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS. Oh!

Enter—Right—CAVALCANTE and BEATRICE.

(DANTE does not notice them.)

DANTE (*to MESSENGERS*). No flattery for your-
selves! In times like these

A man would kick apart the meanest curs
That snarled and snapped each other for the
bone

Beside the city gate, and so save all
That all might still keep watch for Florence.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS. Ah,

You think when you have cursed us all as curs,
That this will keep the city's peace?

MESSENGER FROM WHITES. Well, well;

No man that calls me cur but I call down.

CAVALCANTI What is it? Wait here.

(*Motions to MESSENGER OF WHITES who falls
back.*)

BEATRICE. I have sometimes heard²⁰
That whom the gods destroy they first make
mad.

What pity it would be, did Florence fall,
Because of one defender less to save her!
When foes assail our heights they all should
look

To find us marshalled here in unity;
And all our differences hid as deep
As are the lowest things the valley shadows.

MESSENGER FROM WHITES. You may be right.

MESSENGER FROM BLACKS (*looking toward*
BEATRICE).

Some things that may go wrong
Are righted by the touch of circumstance.

CAVALCANTI. All things are righted by the touch
of reason.

Without it men are but base tools of passion
And all their world here, the abode of brutes.

DANTE (*to MESSENGERS*). Your pardon, gentle-
men; but I must dine

In my own home to-night. I thank you much.

*Exeunt—Left—*CAVALCANTI, BEATRICE *and* MES-
SENGERS FROM BLACKS..

*Exit—Right—*MESSENGER FROM WHITES.

DANTE (*to CINO, taking out his note-book, and looking toward BEATRICE*).

Do your wrists, ankles, thighs, and arms, all
ache?

CINO. All ache?

DANTE. Yes, ache.

CINO. How so?

DANTE. They ache, I say!

At times with too much joy, as if a-tremble
To fly above, yet bound by brawn below;
Or when you bow, insulted, slighted, sad,
They do not ache then, either?

CINO. No, not mine.

DANTE. You never feel your soul here in your
nerves?

CINO. No, no.

DANTE. My nerves are weaker, then, than
yours.

CINO. Your soul may then be stronger.

DANTE. Say not that.

CINO. And better!

DANTE. Nay; no friendship that is true
Was ever caught or kept by flattery.

No; I am weaker, may be worse.

CINO. Take care!

The modest may be more unjust to self
Than are the egotistic to their fellows.

DANTE. If just or not just to myself, who knows it?

Why even you, you do not feel as I do.

Why should a soul, whose one wish is to be
Akin with others—understood,—be made
So different?

CINO (*pointing to DANTE'S note-book*). My
Dante, all the thoughts

That flood the world spring up from single
souls;

And some of these are blest by being forced
To spend their lives interpreting themselves.

DANTE (*putting his note-book in his pocket*).

I thank you; but I fear that any soul

That needs to be interpreted, before

It gains the common love of common men—

For this alone is all for which I long—

Dwells in the doom of some uncommon curse.

CINO. Do not think that.

DANTE. And wherefore should I not?

Here stood two parties. Each I strove to
serve.

With what result?—a brawl befitting wolves,
Till I, dishonored bone of their contention,
Am snarled aside.

CINO. An hour ago, they praised you.

DANTE. What care I for the masses' praise or blame.

But larger atoms of earth's common dust,
If whirled against one or away from one,
They cannot fill or empty thus the sphere
Where dwells the spirit. Let them come or go.
My soul desires not many things but much.
Ah yes, and too much, too much, as it seems!

Enter—Right—GEMMA and OTHER WOMEN.

CINO (*looking toward them*).

Is that what you desire?

DANTE. You said just now
The world could not interpret my desire.
There is but one—and all things work to make
My presence to that one misrepresent me.

GEMMA (*approaching with a garland in her hand, and addressing DANTE*).

Yes, it is brought for you.

DANTE. For me?

GEMMA. For you.

The knight whose hard strife keeps our soil
our own,

As much as gardeners who keep it growing,
Deserves the garland that is got from it.

*Enter—Left—BEATRICE and CAVALCANTI, un-
seen by DANTE.*

DANTE (*to GEMMA and the WOMEN, as he takes the garland*).

I thank you. Fitting, too, it is that these
That represent the beautiful in nature
Should represent it, too, in human form.
What man could fail to do his best to gain
The city's best in symbol and in substance!

(*Bowing to GEMMA, then looking up and seeing BEATRICE, he suddenly sits on the bench.*)²¹

CINO (*bending over him*). What is it?

DANTE.

Nothing.

CINO (*to the OTHERS*). Nothing, so he says.
Perhaps the battle had exhausted him.

CURTAIN.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE: *A Room in the House of DANTE. Against the back wall, nearest the Right Entrance, is a table, on two sides of which are chairs. Other chairs and a sofa are in the Room. Entrances by Doors at Right and Left. The windows are closed and the light not bright.*

The Curtain rising discloses DANTE and CINO sitting at the table. DANTE is listlessly looking away from a manuscript in front of himself; and CINO is diligently examining another.

CINO (*looking toward DANTE*).

Why, Dante, you have lost your interest?—

DANTE. I have.

CINO. Your verse there is not new, of course. I got it from you months ago;⁴ but yet True poems hold the truth as gems the light, When rightly polished drawing to their depth All that is luminous in earth or heaven; And thence reflect it not alone but flash it; And not till all light go, can lose their brilliance.

DANTE. You give the reason, All my light is
gone.

You still write poetry?

CINO. Why, yes, and so
Still need your criticism; ay, just now
Have found a new task baffling me.

DANTE. In what?

CINO. A sister of a friend of mine has died,—
A maiden of such beauty, grace and love,
It were impossible to think her dead,
And not be drawn toward beauty, grace and
love
In their diviner aspects.

DANTE. You would write
Of her?

CINO. So had I thought; but what and how?—
Perhaps you might suggest it.²²

DANTE. Cino, Cino,
I understand you. There are souls on earth
With senses all so fine and penetrant
That no thoughts in a kindred soul can lie
So deeply hidden that they stand not naked.
Not her you mean; not you it is need help.
You mean my own lost love. You mean myself.
You think that hearts too heavy weighed with
grief

May empty through their words as well as tears.

I thank you, Cino. Let my tears flow first.
Our sorrows are half lifted when the souls
Of our true friends have come to bear them
with us.

Last night when darkness fell and veiled my
face²³

From those I surely thought it else had
frighted,

I walked the streets and watched the city
dream.

In lanes, in inns, in churches, and in homes
Each face I gazed at loomed as grim with
shadows

As those that chilled mine own. This funeral
pall

Seemed hung above me wide and high as
heaven,

And grimly draggled as a tear-soaked fringe,
To drips its black between my soul and all
things.

CINO. Think not she lies beneath it. Nay, she
lives ;

And lives where all may look for inspiration.

DANTE. The one sure proof of inspiration is
That it inspires. I feel no inspiration.

CINO. The air of heaven to-day is full of sunshine.

Shut in here do you feel it? No; none do
But those who journey forth to do life's work.
Their lot were yours, were you to follow them.

Knocking at the Left Entrance.

DANTE and CINO both rise.

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT.

DANTE. Excuse me, Cino. I must calm myself—
Will soon return. A man should not look
grieved

To greet a friendly visitor.

Exit—Right—DANTE.

The ATTENDANT opens the door at the Left Entrance.

Enter—Left—CAVALCANTI.

CINO (*to CAVALCANTI*). Good day.

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

CAVALCANTI. I have not seen him lately—never
since

The death of Beatrice—

CINO. That seemed to quench
All ardor in him for all work.

CAVALCANTI. I hope
But temporarily. A mind like his
Glows like a spark upon a wintry hearth,—
The brightest promise that the times afford.

CINO. Vitality as buoyant as his own
Can hardly sink. Yet, whelmed in floods of
grief,
All men at times have need of helping hands.

CAVALCANTI. The hand that helps another most
is his
Whose own hand too would find help.

CINO. Let him know
The help that Florence needs.

CAVALCANTI. The loss he feels
Is like the love it followed, less derived
From outward traits discovered in another,
Than inward temperament revealed in self.
Can any outward substitute replace
That which was all within?—But we can try it.

CINO. He comes, I see.

Enter—Right—DANTE.

He bows to CAVALCANTI.

CAVALCANTI. So sorry for you, friend.

DANTE. I find me in life's path, a traveler
Whom accident has maimed, and would be left
To die, did friends not come to rescue him.

CAVALCANTI. Ay, but they do come!

DANTE. Yes, I thank you, yes;
And yet, what can they do for one?

CINO. Perhaps
Their outstretched hands may show that love
is hidden
Behind the mystery that seems to cloak it.

DANTE. I thank you, Cino.

CINO. Dante, I believe,
Though hard the drill that trains the soul to
read it,
That every message of the stars is written
In letters one can learn to spell on earth.

DANTE. Oh, I can do but little now with letters!

CAVALCANTI. It seems thus to you.

DANTE. Seems thus, Cavalcanti?—
And what is life except the thing that seems?
There was a time this round horizon rested
About my spirit, as about my finger
This ring of gold; and in it gleamed a gem
That centered all heaven's light, and flashed it
forth.

That gem it lost, and all the light is lost.

CAVALCANTI. I hope not, Dante. Florence yet is
left.

DANTE. Alas for Florence!

CAVALCANTI. There are those who
claim

Her destined to receive the help of Rome?

DANTE. How so?

CAVALCANTI. What we are asking. No one knows.

CINO. A mystery yet! The church has not revealed it.

CAVALCANTI. Too much a mystery! When men distrust

Their own thought or their thought's authority
So they disguise it all in robes of office,
Which only men are bid to honor, then
I fear they hide what no man ought to honor.

CINO. You are a skeptic, Cavalcanti.⁹

CAVALCANTI. Yes;

As long as one thing in the world is wrong,
Some skeptic should be here to think it so.

DANTE. Has no one tried to solve the mystery?

CAVALCANTI. To question mysteries guarded by
the church

Does not provoke safe answers in our time.

DANTE. Can no one solve it but the church?

CAVALCANTI. I fear
Donati could; and therefore say I fear.

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT with a card.

DANTE (*taking the card and reading it*). Why,
even now, Donati visits me.

Will you excuse me?

CAVALCANTI. Ay, but may the comer
Be levied to bear tribute to our quest.

DANTE. Will see you later.

CAVALCANTI. Yes, Farewell.

CINO. Farewell.

Excunt—Right—CAVALCANTI and CINO.

The ATTENDANT opens the door at the Left.

*Enter—Left—DONATI, SIMONE, a PRIEST, GEM-
MA, and an Elderly CHAPERON.*

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

DONATI (*to DANTE*). When passing, though by
accident,

The loyal pause to honor royalty,
So we to honor one whom we esteem.

DANTE. I thank you. You are welcome.

(All exchange greetings.)

Will you sit?

(They bow, but do not sit.)

DONATI (*to DANTE*). We have not met you
lately.

DANTE. No.

PRIEST. You think,

You poets, you are called to testify
To what incites you from within, and so
The less you take from outside life the better?

DANTE. At times, if aimed for better poetry.

PRIEST. Oh, say not that!

DANTE. Why not?

PRIEST. If it would grow,
A nature young as yours has need of health.
The spirit's health is hope. Without it none
Attain full manhood. Life is like a day.
It wakes to longer work and larger wage,
The brighter its beginning.

DANTE. Yes, I fear so.

PRIEST. You fear so, eh?—and yet you do not
fear

Insulting nature when it comes to bless you

(Pointing to the closed shutters)

With windows barred like this, as if the day
Had brought not light but lances.

DANTE. Think I need it?

DONATI. At least, enough light from the outer
world

To see what now has come to Florence.

DANTE. What?

DONATI. The Holy Father's promise and protec-
tion

Against the Emperor.

DANTE. Is it true?

DONATI. It is.

PRIEST. And that would bring the whole our
city needs,—

Not strength so much to fight the force without
But spirit to unite the force within.

Life grows here like a tree with outer branches
Too broad for any handling, but with trunk
So small and slender that a single hand
Can fix its destiny for life or death.

The trunk of all that lives is in the spirit.

But find the hand that can be laid on that,
You find what brings to all things bloom or
blight.

DANTE. You mean the Holy Father's?

PRIEST. I mean his.
With outer facts we merely fashion faction,
In inner feeling we find fellowship.

DONATI. He speaks the truth.

DANTE. Ay, what a noon were that!
There were no shade beside a thing on earth,
If heaven's one sun were central over all.
You think it could be done?—could end our
factions?

DONATI. Why could it not?—not many men
would band
Against the Holy Father.

DANTE. And were you—

Were you the source whence came this consum-
mation?

DONATI. So men have said.

DANTE. And will you pardon me?—
In thought, if not in word, my lack of knowl-
edge
Had lacked the honor due you.

DONATI. You are frank.

PRIEST. A mind with thought forever in the
clouds
May be excused for stumbling, now and then,
At what, if seen through, might appear mere
shadow.

GEMMA. One may excuse a bird, if, when it flies,
It fails in seeing everything on earth.²⁴

DANTE. I beg your pardon, lady—for I fear
To court with too much courtesy the truth
That but to be truth bids us oft be curt—
Some poet's eyes are keen as are their fellows!
In searching through the pathways of the past,
What guide men better in their task than
poems?

SIMONE. But how about the future?

DANTE. 'Tis in them
One reads the most of that which is to come.

SIMONE. And in the present, too?

DANTE. In it, not that
Which is but should be, is the poet's theme,
And he who thinks it thinks the thought of
God.

DONATI. Come, come, we need not quarrel. Not
how men
Can fight the air with words, but how their
frames
Can back their words with blows that free their
air
Of all that blocks right doing, this is that
By which a man reveals his worth in life.
And you will join with us, and with the church?

DANTE. You may depend upon me.

DONATI. That I shall.
(*aside to SIMONE.*)

Now we shall have but half the Whites against
us.

(*to DANTE*). I must be going to my offices.

(*to GEMMA*). You said, I think, that you go
elsewhere?

GEMMA. Yes.

DONATI (*to DANTE*). Good morning, Senior.

DANTE (*bidding Good-bye to DONATI, SIMONE
and OTHERS*).

Thank you for your visit.

*Exeunt—Left—*DONATI, SIMONE, PRIEST *and*
ATTENDANTS.

(*to* GEMMA).

They seemed in haste.

GEMMA. Are bent on business.

DANTE. You know, I sometimes think that business

Is like a cyclone, fills our ways with dust
And bustle; yet men say it comes to clear them
And bring us rest and comfort. Humph!—
farewell.

GEMMA. So kind in you to help my uncle!²⁴

DANTE. No;

My heart belongs to Florence; only beats
That she may live her life; and he was kind
In helping her; and I have gratitude.

Ay, he was right. For us one hope remains,—
The church. We both look forward to the
church,

And, joined by it, our union will be perfect.

*Enter—Right—*CAVALCANTI *and* ATTENDANTS.

They overhear the last sentence.

*Exeunt—Left—*GEMMA *and* CHAPERON.

DANTE (*turning to* CAVALCANTI).

Ah, back again?

CAVALCANTI. We are.

DANTE. Have news?

CAVALCANTI. We had.—
Had learned a good deal since, just now, we
left you.

DANTE. What was it?

CAVALCANTI. Nay, like wise men, we
are wary
Of friends that follow those with hostile colors.

DANTE. I do not see—

CAVALCANTI. We saw and heard and
know.

DANTE. Oh that was nothing!

CAVALCANTI. Not for you, perhaps.
But very much for us.

DANTE. Let me explain.

CAVALCANTI. You need not; nor excuse it.
Temperament
And taste, like flower and fragrance, go to-
gether.

What God hath joined let man not put asunder.

DANTE. But you—

CAVALCANTI. Have found before, that family
reasons,

At times, turn white to black.

DANTE. Are no such reasons.

CAVALCANTI. Mere words are wind; not all their
storm or stress

Can pack the air so thought cannot see through
it.

DANTE. You mean?

CAVALCANTI. We overhead

DANTE. And think—

CAVALCANTI. And know.

DANTE. To know one needs to learn. How did
you learn?—

What steps were those that led up to your
knowledge?

CAVALCANTI. When mortals climb a path to
truth unseen,

They feel their way along the links of logic.

DANTE. Aha!

CAVALCANTI. The notes just heard from you but
echo

The strains that all have heard you pipe for
months.

DANTE. Why then have I myself not heard the
echoes?

CAVALCANTI. I take you, Dante, for a man of
honor.¹⁸

And after prying, pulling, plucking, plying,
With such a maiden's heart, you would not
fling

The soiled thing back to her, face us and claim
You had been empty handed?¹⁸

DANTE. Cavalcanti!—

And you, of all men, knew the thing I meant!

CAVALCANTI. The thing you said!—To God with
what you meant.—

One who has not his confidence must guess it.

DANTE. How did my spirit trip to fall so far
In your esteem?

CAVALCANTI. We mortals are compounded
Of sense below, and spirit resting on it.
If sense give way, no wonder spirit falls.

DANTE. You deem me treacherous to the one
above

That so I love; and treacherous too to one²⁵
That I do not love?—By your hope of heaven,
In your deep heart, can you believe this of me?

CAVALCANTI. Why, think you, some men call me
skeptical?—

Because I say what I believe, not so?

DANTE. But do you think?—

CAVALCANTI. What else, pray, could
one think?—

You just took council with Donati.

DANTE. There!—

Again your jealousy! He called on me,
Not I on him.

CAVALCANTI. You know his object?

DANTE.

Yes—

To end our factions for us here in Florence,—
To place above us all the sovereignty
Which only brings good will and peace on
earth.

CAVALCANTI. And you have pledged yourself
and followers

To join Donati in enthroning him?

DANTE. I have.

CAVALCANTI. You fool.

DANTE.

Take care.

CAVALCANTI.

I say but truth.

A man who fails to judge the character
Of what is promised by the character
Of him who promises, reveals no mind;
For mind is what connects effect and cause.
You knew the baseness of Donati, yet
Guessed not the baseness that was in his plan.
Henceforward, though you know a bush be
poison,
Bid men come pluck and gorge its pretty berries;
And, if all die, expect no blame for it—
You have but carried out the kind of thought
With which heaven filled the kind of mind like
yours.

Surrender, would you, to the Holy Father?²⁶

You know what that means?—All his troops
come armed.

Their leader is the French prince, Charles of
Valois.

The Emperor, I tell you, is a very god
Beside a devil of a man like Charles,—
A treacherous, truthless, crafty, cruel brute;
Who too comes pledged to slaughter or to
banish

Each man of us not in Donati's faction.

DANTE. Can this be true?

CAVALCANTI. It is. May heaven defend us!
The pull that lifts one by a rotting rope
Is far less dangerous than the help that comes
From foolish friends.

*Enter, suddenly—Left—*DONATI, SIMONE, PRIEST
and ATTENDANTS.

DONATI (*noticing CAVALCANTI and ATTEND-
ANTS*).

Aha! They would dissuade you?

DANTE. There seems a difference of opinion
here.

DONATI. I have your promise.

CAVALCANTI. And I fear a traitor.

DONATI (*to DANTE*). And he has given you
proof?

CAVALCANTI (*to* DONATI). What need of proof?
We best can judge of some things by their
source,—

Of days by daylight, and of good by goodness.
Heaven sends the one, and only heavenly traits
Can bring the other.

DONATI (*to* CAVALCANTI). Yours are heavenly
traits?—

He made a promise. Now you bid him break
it?

CAVALCANTI. A promise made to suit a lie but
robes

Untruth which truth should strip and so show
naked.

DONATI. Here stand my men; and if his tongue
prove false,

(*pointing toward* DANTE.)

Their blades know how to cut it loose from
him.

CAVALCANTI. And here stand mine; and if he
prove a traitor,

Their blades know how to cut him loose from
us.

DONATI (*to* DANTE). Now choose between us,
if you dare.

CAVALCANTI.

Ay, choose!

DANTE. Have you considered that to which you dare me?

To start right here a civil war in Florence?
Kill off our bravest citizens, and open
The doors of half our homes to lust and murder?

And do you think that I could dare do that?
You bid me choose between you. You forget
There is another power upon the earth
Far higher, stronger, than can be your own.

(placing his hand on the PRIEST)

I hide beneath the shelter of the church.

I vow a pilgrimage to Rome; and thus

(turning to DONATI)

Fulfill my promise,

(turning to CAVALCANTI)

and find out the truth

From him who knows it best,—the Holy
Father.²⁷

CURTAIN.

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE: *A Monk's Cell, dimly lighted by a single lamp connected by a door with a church, from which the sound of musical instruments and of singing can be heard. The cell is plainly furnished with three or four chairs or benches. In the Right rear is an alcove in front of which hangs a Curtain. This can be opened revealing a space about the size of a window, through which, at times indicated in the text, a head and bust can be seen.*

Entrances, Right and Left, the latter into the church.

Enter—Left—DANTE and CINO, shutting the door and making the cell dark.

DANTE. My journey wrought no good. The
 holy father
Kept me a prisoner there for months, you
 know,²⁷
For fear my presence here should thwart his
 purpose;—
Was courteous, of course; but Cavalcanti
Was more than half-way warranted, I fear.
In church or state, the official seems the same:

A palm in front to beg one for a bribe,
A fist behind with which to threaten him.

CINO. Yet you yourself are prior of the city?

DANTE. And so have learned that when men
give us votes,

They lie in wait to get their gifts returned,—
To wrest from us an undeserved reward,
Or brand us ingrates whom all friends desert.

CINO. Oh, say not all!

DANTE. No, Cino, no; not all.²⁸

Forgive me, Cino. Since we two were boys,
The only love I felt would be returned,
Was what I gave to you.

CINO. And yet they say
The love of woman——

DANTE. Could that satisfy
And thrill with aught so true, unselfish,
pure?—

I worship boyhood, thinking what we were.

CINO. But what of Rome?

DANTE. If leading toward the wrong,
Ought those who seek the right to follow her?

CINO. Good children follow.

DANTE. Parents gone insane,
Or but awry, are saved by opposition.
Love uniformed and forced in hatred's press-
gang

Is only served by those who war against it.
Our thoughts of good should learn to separate
The heavenly dove from its foul earthly nest.
To hold the latter's dead impurity
At one with spotless life that wings on high,
Is often to deserve—I will not judge them.
I would I could forget them. Do you know
Some men there are have murder in their
 hearts
Through all their lives; and if they murder
 not——

CINO. They may be rightly numbered with the
 saints.

Not what our lower nature makes us feel,
But what our higher nature lets us do,
Determines what we are.

DANTE. I hope so, friend.

At times my soul appears a stormy sea,
All rage below and rain above; and then
It seems the tears I shed have drained me dry,
And left a void too deep for faith in God
Or man to fill.

CINO. For that I brought you here.

DANTE. And kindly meant, but yet we mortals
 find

That few things, when we turn them inside out,
Are proved to be the miracles we thought them.

CINO. But you may see here for yourself.

DANTE. Oh no!

The time to see the feathers on a wing
Is not the while it flies; no, no; and not
While playing sleight of hand to see the fin-
gers.

CINO. But you can use your judgment.

DANTE. No, again!—

No man who is no expert risks a judgment
On questions experts only can decide,
Without revealing his own lack of judgment.

CINO. At least, your mind is open.

DANTE. Yet to what?—

All brains with limits are what polyps own
You think?—Ours too fit forms whose grasp
can never
Outreach the touch of short tentaculae.
Your monk has credit here?²⁹

CINO. With some he has.

They think that through him they have seen the
virgin.

DANTE. Humph!

CINO. He is coming.

Enter—Right—MONK.

(to MONK).

I have brought with me
The Senior—He is prior of the city.

MONK. You do me honor.

CINO. Would consult with you
About the city's welfare.

MONK. I know not
What may be granted. Sometimes at this hour,
The while one hears the music in the church,
I sink unconscious. Then, so am I told,
Some higher power proclaims its presence
through me.

Music is heard from the church with the following words:

The sky contains full half I see.
In soil below I live, I love.
High in the half that looms above,
Oh, is there nothing there for me?

During the music, the MONK points to the curtain. CINO and DANTE draw it aside, and examine the walls and floors behind and beneath; then the MONK goes into the alcove and draws the curtain behind him. The words of the song are followed by a soft instrumental interlude.

DANTE. Seems honest.

CINO. I have thought so.

DANTE. Could one solve
All motives and all means of mystery,
There were no sphere for faith.

CINO. Yes; sit you here.

CINO and DANTE take seats at the Left, facing the Curtain. Throughout the seance, DANTE, now and then, writes in his notebook.

DANTE. And now you think the prior of the city
May meet an actual holy father, eh?

After the instrumental interlude the following is sung:

The sky's bright sun and stars I see.

The soil below is guised in green.

In heaven whose orbs are robed in sheen,

Oh, is there nothing there for me?

These words are followed by a soft instrumental interlude. The curtain begins to move from side to side. Then it opens and a Woman's form robed in a white gown appears.

CINO. That seems a woman.

DANTE. But the Monk was beardless.

CINO. Yet note how slim she is.

DANTE. She may be, yes.

FIGURE. Good evening, friends.

DANTE. A very good falsetto!

The figure after making gestures disappears.

CINO. Well done, not so?

DANTE. Too well!

CINO. Could you explain it?

DANTE. Why no; not wholly. What of that?

At times,

That facts are facts is plain without explaining.

To know things grow, we need not know their methods.

To think things handiwork, we need not see

The hand that does the work. What was she, think you?—

And what her object?

CINO. Was a guide preparing

The way for more.

DANTE. Conducting spirit, eh?

After the instrumental interlude the following is sung:

In thoughts within, sweet rest I see.

In things without, but dust and toil.

Where hang no veils of flesh and soil,

Oh, is there nothing there for me?

These words are followed by a soft instrumental interlude. The Curtain opens, and a Man's Figure clothed in white appears.

CINO. Watch that now.

DANTE. Has a beard, and well put on.

FIGURE. The world keeps whirling on from day
to night.

None always dwell where always glows the
light.

When darkness comes, and doubt assails the
mind,

Then light and faith come following swift be-
hind.

The figure disappears.

DANTE. Is optimistic. Yet the merest child
Could recognize the monk there by his voice.
And what was he?

CINO. A guide.

DANTE. Another, eh?—
And learned his lesson well. But when will
those

That need the guiding come?

CINO. Must wait and watch.

*After the instrumental interlude the following is
sung:*

In faith and hope and love I see
Why earth sent home the Christ that came.
When I go home, and own the same,
Oh, is there nothing there for me?

*These words are followed by a soft instru-
mental interlude. The curtain opens and
a Figure of Beatrice clothed in white ap-
pears.*

CINO. Look there. I think your name was called too.

DANTE. Yes.—
And shall I answer?

CINO. I would—go and see it.
DANTE (*rising and approaching the curtain*).

Why, why,—what is it?—Cino, can you help me?

Come here, please, come.

CINO. Why, that is Beatrice.³⁰

DANTE. You see her?

CINO. Yes.

DANTE. And it is not my fancy?

CINO. Nay, question not yourself, but her—less loud!—

She else may disappear.

DANTE (*to the FIGURE*). You come to me?

FIGURE. And do you know me then?

DANTE. Are Beatrice?—
You wear her form.—What would you have me do?—

FIGURE. Do what you dreamt last night, and now design.

DANTE. And then, what then?

FIGURE (*disappearing*). Then—we shall meet again.

DANTE. Wait, wait! (to CINO) Why, call her back!

CINO. No, not to-day.
You spoke too loud. Hear that?—The monk is waking.

DANTE. Why I—I had no chance to test its truth.

CINO. And yet you saw her.

DANTE. Yes.

CINO. And so did I.

DANTE. And if I come again here, can I see her?

Enter—from behind the Curtain—the MONK.

DANTE *continues, addressing the MONK.*

What I have seen now, can I see again?

MONK. They tell me so. And did you get the thought

To guide you in the conduct of the city?

DANTE. The conduct of?—Oh yes, you thought of that!

(to CINO).

But as I sat here, I had not that thought,
But one sweet thought of her, and how to reach her;

And what it was that filled the space between us;

And how I could describe it! Did you hear
The word she spake. She bade me tell my dream

Of moving toward and meeting her.—But how
Could she have known it! Could I but believe
She was a spirit sent here to inspire me!

(to MONK).

And you will let me come again, and probe
The truth of this?

MONK. I will; yet now it seems
That you believe it.

DANTE. With my heart I do.

MONK. And sometimes hearts judge better than
do heads.

CINO. Ay, sometimes things may be so beautiful,
And fill the spirit with such holy thrills,
To doubt them were akin to doubting God,
When face to face with his own blazing pres-
ence.

MONK. At least, all beauty changes what it
brightens.

A flower that blooms may merely fall to soil,
But, when it does, the soil to which it falls
Is never quite the same it was before.

DANTE. Yet mind has methods that must be
fulfilled.

You say that I may come again. I thank you.
(to CINO).

To save mine honor that men else had
doubted, ^{18 25 31}

I had to marry; yet I feared I wronged

The memory of this other. Now, if true—
Oh Cino, think!—She may forgive and guide
me!

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT and GEMMA.

*They open the door and leave it open, letting in
much more light.*

Sh—sh—my wife.

*(gesturing and speaking to both CINO and the
MONK).*

No word of this to her!

GEMMA *(bowing to others and speaking to
DANTE).*

I came here to attend the funeral—³²

Seniora Frescobaldi. Then I learned

That you had crossed the cloister. You should
know

The threatened danger. Whites and Blacks
have come

In crowds and companies, all frowns and
threats.

DANTE. They surely have not brought their
weapons?

GEMMA.

Yes.

DANTE. Oh swine!—to use the very house of
God

As if a sty to glut their groveling hate!—

We should prevent this.

MONK. I will keep them parted.

(Holding up his cross).

Against the cross they will not dare to fight.

Exit—Left—MONK.

DANTE. The city-guards should be informed at once.

Here, take you this for me.

(Writing on a paper, and handing it to ATTENDANT.)

Exit—Right—ATTENDANT.

(A noise of conflict.)

CINO. Already fighting?

He moves toward the door at the Left.

Enter—Left—The MONK, evidently slain, borne by ATTENDANTS.

DANTE *(to CINO, as he himself kneels down to examine the MONK on the floor).*

Killed him? killed him?—and I can learn no more?—

The gates of heaven that he could set ajar,
And he alone, must now be closed again?

Enter—Left—CAVALCANTI and DONATI, both respectively followed by Whites and Blacks. DANTE rises and continues to them).

Oh you accursed heathen! worse than those

Who ignorantly crucified the Lord!

You knew his messenger, yet murdered him.

ATTENDANT OF CAVALCANTI. It was an accident.

DANTE.

An accident!—

Like that which follows from the rock that falls

Where men who lie in wait have loosened it.

An accident—oh yes!—that plots to arm

The palsied, shaking, thought-void clutch of
rage

And let it loose to raise a hellish storm

Just where the good have come for heavenly
calm!

The lightning of your flashing blades fell not
By accident.

ATTENDANT OF CAVALCANTI. It was Donati's
men.

That started it.

ATTENDANT OF DONATI. Nay, Cavalcanti's.

DANTE.

Nay,

But both; and all whose orders brought these
arms.

When mortals are our hosts, the meanest man

Will not insult them in their homes, but you

Come here to God's house with intent to break

His law of love, and kill his ministers.

Why, one might almost visit hell today

In safety,—so deserted by the fiends

Called out to take possession here of you!

(*Some draw swords and threaten him.*)

You threaten me?—Why not?—Just now in there

(*pointing toward the Left*)

Were threatening God!—And do I fear you?

—No;

I have no need. The men who dare do right
Enlist with God, who guards—or guides them
home.

Enter—Right—A File of City Guards.

There is one certain way to end these troubles.

I had my doubts before. The priors lack

One vote by which to banish both your leaders,—

Yes, Cavalcanti and Donati, both.³²

GEMMA. Nay, say not that!

DANTE. I say that I shall give it;
And clear my conscience, while I clear this air,
And clean these foul and corpse-clogged lanes
of Florence.

Let this be done, her son's aspiring hope

May picture outlines of her destiny

In hues more bright and sweet than could be
dreamed

By any soul bemired here and bestench'd.

In blotches of your cursed Black and White.

CURTAIN.

ACT FIFTH.

SCENE: *The same as in Act Third. Backing, at the center, a desk connected with a writing table. In the desk are many papers in confusion; and, near it, on the floor a waste basket. In the room are chairs and sofas. The curtain rising discloses DANTE with pen in hand sitting before a paper on the desk, humming and drumming with his fingers, as if marking off time to some rhythm.*

Enter—Right—GEMMA.

GEMMA (*to DANTE*). What are you doing?

DANTE.

Writing.

GEMMA.

Always writing.

DANTE. That is my mission.

GEMMA.

Not your business.

DANTE. They differ?

GEMMA.

Yes. One's mission, as a rule,

Is wrought alone; one's business with others.

Things done alone may but be done for self.

Things done with others may be done, too, for them.

DANTE. True missions only serve the higher self.

GEMMA. Some people always think their own
selves higher

Than are the selves of those about them.

DANTE. Oh!—

You knew me as a poet when we married.

GEMMA. I knew you as a boy, too; and I thought
That when you grew you would become a man.

There was a time my uncle thought so, too.

He pictured you a hero and a leader.

Now none dare claim you as a follower.

DANTE. None dare?

GEMMA. Who dares to have a follower
That stabs him in the back, as you have stabbed
Donati and your great friend, Cavalcanti?

DANTE. You know I try to follow what is right.

GEMMA. And never find the right save in your-
self;

And, if you did, your endless cant and chatter,
Knagged out like warnings from a rattler's
tail,

Would worry off your faction's foes before
You harmed them.

DANTE. So you think me wrong?

GEMMA. As all do.

Who vote you prior now? They tax your all
Like some plebean. When you wish to work,
None care to wager wages on your doing.

DANTE. And my own household also turn against me?

GEMMA. Besides descending to your disesteem,
Your wife should hanker, eh, and hunger too
To starve with you!³³

(Snatches and tears up the manuscript he is writing.)

DANTE *(trying, at first, to save his manuscript)*.
And why do you do that?

GEMMA. To wake you up.

DANTE. One who writes out his dream
Must be awake already.

GEMMA. I would make
You realize it, so I tear it up.

DANTE. One dream was torn up long ago, I fear.
Why, Gemma, when I married you, I judged
Your spirit by the beauty of its body;
And that seemed so at one with what I fancied
I could not doubt that it would prove at one—
Could we but know each other, through and
through—

With all my soul that had conceived the fancy.

GEMMA. 'Twas not the first time life has proved
that poets

Are fools who judge their fancies to be facts.

DANTE. At times, my faith still thinks they may
be facts.

Our fancies are the children of the soul,
 And all their heritage of prophesy
 Forms but the heir-loom to which they are
 born.

GEMMA. Yes, yes, still prating of the soul!—
 as if

A man could take it out and measure it!

DANTE. The stature of the soul is measured by
 The distance of its outgrowth over earth.

GEMMA. The outgrowth, eh?—explains your
 misfit, does it?—

Oh yes!—you have outgrown your low sur-
 roundings?

DANTE. Why misinterpret me? I may not fit
 The world I live in. Did the Christ fit his?
 Could any man walk straight in paths of earth,
 Nor trespass on some crooked path of others?

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT, and behind him
 DINO.

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

GEMMA and DANTE. Good day.

DINO. Good day.

DANTE. And is
 there any news?

DINO. There is, and bad. I thought I ought to
 warn you.

L OF C.

DANTE. How so?

DINO. Donati is returning soon
With Charles of Valois, and the French to back
him.

DANTE. The Whites will not be able to protect
us?

DINO. The Whites have lost their leader.

DANTE. Cavalcanti
Can be recalled now, if Donati come.

DINO. No, no; not he; he is beyond recall.

DANTE. What mean you?

DINO. He was banished by the priors
To Sarzana.—It is the home of fevers.³²

They welcomed him too warmly. He is gone.

DANTE. I never knew of fever raging there.

GEMMA. As many go astray through ignorance
As through iniquity. Ay, there are times
Wise rascals do less harm than righteous fools.

DANTE. You speak like that to me, and now?
Oh God!

When all my soul sinks downward with the
weight

Of that dead body of my friend?—no pity?
You know there was but one right thing to do.
I could not let the wish of this rash friend
Outweigh the safety of the whole of Florence.

GEMMA. And yet be sure the whole of Florence
feels

Less gratitude for you, than grief for him.

His friends, at least——

DANTE. I see; and I who tried
To meet out equal justice to a hoard
In church and state, all squirming here like
worms
To tomb their mates in dirt and mount upon
them,
Priests cursing people, people cheating priests,
Whites boasting of white shrouds they trail
behind them,
Blacks of black funeral palls that follow them,
And every one of them too mean to own
One other man the equal of himself,—
I stand the enemy of all. Oh God!—
Some spirits here may seek thy higher life,
And help their fellows. It is not for me.
Would I mount up, I find no wings for it.
I fall.

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT and CINO.

All exchange greetings.

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

(DANTE continues to CINO).

And you, too, come to bring bad tidings?

CINO. I bring this proclamation. It concerns you.

(*Handing a paper to DANTE.*)

DANTE (*taking the paper and looking at it*).

Who wrote it, and who sent it, and from where?

CINO. It comes here from Donati and Prince Charles.

They march against the city.

DANTE. But the Whites?

CINO. We have no leader, and the most are flying.

DANTE. What says the proclamation?

CINO. It names you,
And four besides you, summoned to appear³⁴
And answer for extortion and rebellion
Against the Pope and Charles.

DANTE. Extortion? What?—
For raising pence to keep the city's peace?—
Rebellion, toward the city's enemies?
Who charges that?

CINO. It says here, "common fame."

DANTE. What threatens those who fail to heed the summons?

CINO. Their property shall all be confiscated,

Themselves be banished, and, if caught in
Florence,
Be burned alive.

DANTE. If I obey the summons
And speak the truth, they will obtain their
wish;
I shall be caught in Florence.

CINO. You should leave.

DANTE. Too true! but, first—you are a lawyer,
Dino—

Draw up a paper, making over all
My property to Gemma.

(DINO sits at the desk and writes.)

CINO (*taking DANTE to extreme Left*). Why
not deed

The property to some one else in trust?

DANTE. Not safe! If held as mine it might be
doomed.

Donati's niece could keep it for herself.

CINO. She might not deed it back.

DANTE. She would not take it
From her own children; and, you know, be-
sides,

We men who wed incur a debt of honor.

CINO. But should that let one harm himself?

DANTE. Why, honor
Is in oneself, and so does not depend

On anything another is or does.

(*to DINO*).

The paper will be ready soon, not so?

I must prepare me, and will then return.

Exit—Right—DANTE.

GEMMA (*to DINO*). You must be sure to make
all clear and certain.

CINO (*to GEMMA*). What will you do without
him?

GEMMA. Humph!—not penance!

We do that only to the ones we worship.

CINO. So women do not worship those they
marry.

GEMMA. Not after they have married them.

CINO. Why not?

GEMMA. They get too near them.

CINO. Humph! but that depends

On what one means. They can not get too
near

To anyone in spirit.

GEMMA. What is that?

CINO. That in us which has least of body in it;
And yet, like fire, may glow when bodies meet,
And make one's whole life luminous.

GEMMA (*looking at him disparagingly*). A poet!

CINO. Yes; making poetry is practicing

The language of the spirit. I should like
To learn to speak it altogether.

GEMMA. Should you?—
That wish is what sends Dante now from Florence.

CINO. That wish is what sends Dante now from Florence;

I shall remember. May I quote you to him?

GEMMA. 'Twill be so kind of you, reminding him
Of me!

Enter—Right—DANTE.

DANTE (*to DINO*). The writing ready?

DINO (*rising and handing the paper to him*).
Brief but clear.

DANTE (*reading it*).

I see—will sign it.

(*to CINO and DINO.*)

Will you witness for me?

DANTE, CINO and DINO *sign*.

DANTE (*handing paper to GEMMA*).

There, Gemma, well nigh all I had is yours.

You show it to your uncle. He will guard you.

(*Knocking outside.*)

CINO (*looking through the window backing at the Left*).

They seem Donati's men (*to DANTE*). They
come to fetch you.

DANTE (*turning toward the door*). I——

CINO. No, you must not. (*Pointing to Right.*)

Leave the other way,

And jump the garden fence there—in the rear.

DINO. And yet the streets are full of them.

CINO. Wait, wait!

(*removing his own hood and cloak.*)

All know your hood and cloak. Take mine.

None think

Enough of these to stop and question them.

DANTE. First let me show myself; and make
them sure

That I am here.

(*thrusting his head from the window.*)

What is it that you want?

VOICE. Yourself.

DANTE. The house is not in order. Wait.

The madam must get ready to receive you.

(*to CINO and DINO, as he puts on CINO's
cloak and hood.*)

I thank you for your kindness, gentlemen.

(*shaking hands with them.*)

A last word to my children; then I go.

DINO. Where shall we find you?

DANTE. At Verona soon—

Will send a messenger.

Exit—Right—DANTE and GEMMA.

(*Knocking outside.*)

VOICE OUTSIDE. You keep us waiting.

CINO (*putting on DANTE's hood and cloak*).

They all will deem me Dante. Note how well
I imitate his voice.

DINO. Is danger!

CINO (*thrusting his head out of the window*).

Wait;

Wait till the madam—gets——

VOICE OUTSIDE. It was not her,

But you we want.

CINO. I know; but please be patient.

(CINO *draws in his head*.)

Enter—Right—GEMMA.

DINO (*to GEMMA*). Has left?

GEMMA. Will soon—

CINO (*looking about the room*). How is it with
his papers?

Should they discover aught?—

GEMMA *moves toward DANTE's desk, CINO follows and continues.*

The speaking voice

Is like a church bell, mainly rung for service;

But writing made for sight is like a belfry,

And draws attention to one's need of service.

GEMMA (*pulling from disordered papers on the*

desk a manuscript, and tearing it, and then throwing the parts into a waste-basket).

Not much here,—only poems!

CINO.

Yes, but they—

GEMMA (*thrusting her hand apparently against a pen that pricks it*).

One could not get a pen—I mean a penny
For all of them. You know the difference
Between a poet and a pig?

CINO.

No; what?

GEMMA. The pen of one is always in a litter.

The other's litter always in a pen.

(CINO and DINO exchange looks as if not relishing the joke.)

Loud knocking at the door.

(GEMMA indicates that there is nothing more in the desk.)

CINO. Now when they come, we all should bide by this,—

That it was I who wore this hood of Dante—
To keep the chill off; and (to GEMMA) are
both your friends,

Who sped to tell you of Donati's coming.

We thus give Dante time.

DINO.

Has need of time,

Or else will quickly get eternity.

Shall let them in now, eh?

(*moving toward the Left*).

CINO. Ay, ay; but lend
Your eye to me, and arm too, if they press me.
DINO *opens the Door at the left, then apparently
opens another beyond it.*

*Enter—Left—SIMONE and many ATTENDANTS.
They look around them, then besiege CINO
who is at the Right. CINO draws his
sword, as do several of the ATTENDANTS.
After some fencing, CINO throws aside
his hood and cloak.*

CINO. A hood may hide a woman. This does
not.

Now, man to man!

SIMONE. Hold on! You are not Dante.

CINO. I never claimed to be.

SIMONE. You acted him.

ATTENDANT (*brandishing his sword*).

His false hood fits the falseness of his head.

CINO. Because his hood is covering my head,
It does not cover all his head contained.

ATTENDANT. It makes you take his place.

CINO. What, I?

SIMONE. Yes, you!—

What else have you his cloak for?

CINO. It was cold.

I came here to Donati's niece,—to tell her

Donati had returned, and then I felt
A chill assail my back. This cloak has killed it.
Is killing chills a crime you kill a man for?

SIMONE. But where is Dante?

CINO. How should I know that?

SIMONE. He just was at the window here.

CINO. Why I—
'Twas I talked there.

SIMONE. Pretending to be Dante!

CINO. Pretending?—Now by all that makes me
human

Am I to blame that you have human nature?
You work yourselves up to a fever, see
The image of your own imagination,
Then swear 'twas I caused your delirium!

SIMONE. Humph! Leave him. Search the house.
Exeunt —Right—DINO and CINO.

GEMMA (*confronting an ATTENDANT, as he turns
from CINO*).

Nay, you forget.

I am Donati's niece.

ATTENDANT. And what of that?

This house is Dante's. You are Dante's wife.

SIMONE. He flies all colors and he follows none.
So where they fly we all are sure to track
A turncoat treacherous to every hue.

Aha, he dreamed of ending factions here:
He did it!—All unite in fighting him.

Exit—Right—SIMONE and OTHERS.

Those remaining break windows and furniture.

Enter—Left—DONATI.

GEMMA (*to DONATI*). What mean these creatures here creating chaos

In this, my house?

DONATI. It is the house of Dante.

GEMMA (*showing him the paper given her by DANTE*). It is mine.

DONATI (*looking at the papers*). Aha! This makes a difference.

(*to the soldiers*) Hold, hold.

Enter—Right—SIMONE.

SIMONE. The house has been searched through.

DONATI. No Dante?

SIMONE. No.

DONATI. Withdraw, and set a double guard outside.

(*to GEMMA*).

They wrecked things badly. Is there more of it?

GEMMA. I have not seen.

DONATI. Shall I go with you?

Enter—Right—CINO and DINO.

Who

Are these?

GEMMA. Some friends of mine. They just had come

To tell me they had heard of your return.

DONATI. Humph, humph! (*to SIMONE*). You give them passage.

Exeunt—Left—SIMONE and ATTENDANTS.

DINO (*to DONATI*). If you please,

We first would find our cloaks and hoods.

DONATI.

Of course.

Exeunt—Right—DONATI and GEMMA.

DINO (*to CINO, collecting carefully, as he speaks, the parts of the torn manuscript in the waste basket, and concealing them under his cloak*).

This world contains two kinds of people,
Cino,—

The kind who see the whole thing in its parts,
And those who see the parts, and not the
whole.³⁵

CURTAIN.

ACT SIXTH.

SCENE: *The Interior of a large Hall in the Castle of the Marquis of Malaspina in Lunigiana. Backing, at the center, are curtains that can be drawn aside. Near the Curtains at the Left is a Writing Desk in which are papers belonging to DANTE. Entrances through the Curtains at Back, and also at the Right and the Left.*

Enter—Right—DANTE.

Enter—Left—CINO.

DANTE (*taking CINO's hands in his*). Why, why!
—Thank God to see you once again!

CINO. I, too, thank God. How are you?

DANTE. Well enough
In body.

CINO. I am pleased to find you here
In such environment,—so beautiful!

DANTE. Earth might have more of beauty, had
it had

More continence; nor spent, and spawned
such crowds

Between ourselves and nature. As it is,
What tempt our taste appear too often served
Like viands one can scarcely find for flies,

Or test for spice and pepper. Well, what news
From Florence?

CINO. Could one call that news which but
Repeats the same old story?—brawls and mur-
ders?—

I had to fly myself.³⁶

DANTE. So had I heard.
But, thank the Lord, it soon will end now.

CINO. Will?

DANTE. One time I trusted Rome—in vain. At
last,

Comes Henry of Luxemburg, the emperor.³⁷

No doubt of him, a man of strength, have
seen him.

CINO. Beneath your cloak you seem to wear—
not so?—

A soldier's uniform?

DANTE. I have enlisted,
And join him. You come too—our very man!

CINO. All thought you firm of faith in the repub-
lic?

DANTE. I am. No tyrant ever triumphed yet
But first came cowards kneeling to be trod on.
Yet something more is true. Strong self-
control

Has never yet forsaken man or clan

Where did not enter the control of others.
Which others is the one sole question now
For half demented Florence. Let a grip
So firm that all should feel it, rein and curb
And guide by reason her untamed disorder,
Think what our people, letters, art, might do.—
Why, all the world of thought would focus
there,

And all enlightenment find there their sun!

CINO. And you have waived the student for the
soldier?

DANTE. I tell you, friend, say what you may of
thought,

Man's brawn was given him as well as brain,
And there are things to tramp for, things to
clutch,

And days for doing. They are brighter, too,
At times, than nights for dreaming.

CINO. You forsake
The path of poetry?

DANTE. Why no; not that;
Not wholly that! I mean a man should wield
And welcome, too, the whole that nature gives
him.

The fist is fashioned for the use of God
In just as true a sense as is the finger,—
What grasps a sword as that which guides a
pen.

Enter—Right—ATTENDANT.

DANTE (*continues to ATTENDANT*).

And are they ready?

ATTENDANT.

Nay, they will not go.

DANTE. Not go?—and wherefore not?

ATTENDANT.

Had you not heard?

DANTE. Heard what?

ATTENDANT. About the Emperor?—was ill.

DANTE. Oh, yes; but only slightly—could receive us.

ATTENDANT. Nay, nay;—is very ill.

DANTE.

You cannot mean—

Impossible!—that he is dead?

ATTENDANT.

He is.

DANTE (*to CINO*). Now heaven defend! It must not, can not be.

ATTENDANT. And there has come a rumor with it too.

DANTE. What is it?—From your mien I should infer

It matters to myself.

ATTENDANT.

If you bide longer

Within this castle, there come hints of war.

A patron who should shield the Emperor's friend

Would seem to be the foe of Italy.

DANTE. Ah, so!—I must have time to think—I thank you.

Exit—Right—ATTENDANT.

(DANTE continues to CINO.)

Oh Cino, Cino, did one ever dream
A fate like mine?—a civic leper, Cino!—
Turned out of his own home because a pest;
And then declared a pest to every home
That would have welcomed him. This final
blow,
It snaps the only staff remaining now
From which my soul could wave a single signal.

Worse off am I, than were a soldier slain.
Ay, than a traveler in a tiger's den.
If but these limbs were plucked out, one by one,
I were not doomed to live on then alone,
An alien to all comrades, conscious ever
That to oppose the currents coursing round
Were vain as efforts of mere spurting spray
To still a surging ocean. Oh, my God!—
To live, yet be too frail to do the work
That makes a life worth living!

CINO. I have heard
You might go back to Florence.

DANTE. How is that?—

Go back to Florence?—what?—and see those hills,

My home, my children, friends, and have a voice

And be again a man with countrymen!—

Ah, say not that,—not if it be not true!

The brute-despair my soul has housed so long
Is trained to bear hard blows, and beat them back;

But this frail trembling babe of hope, just born,
Oh it were cruel murder, maiming it!

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT (*to DANTE*). Some gentlemen without await you, Senior.

CINO. They now may bring the hope I mentioned.

DANTE. Yes.

He bows to the ATTENDANT.

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

CINO (*to DANTE*). Shall I retire?

DANTE (*gesturing toward the Right Entrance*).

'Twere well. If seen with me,

My shadow might shed blackness on yourself.

CINO. The blackest shadows fall from brightest forms.

Exit—Right—CINO.

*Enter—Left—*ATTENDANT, SIMONE *and* OTHER
DELEGATES.

All exchange bows.

DANTE (*to those entering*). You come from
Florence, gentlemen?

SIMONE. We do;
And from your friends there.

DANTE. Have I friends
there?—Thank you.

SIMONE. And they have thought it better for our
peace,
And for the peace of other cities near us,
To end this feud between ourselves and you.

DANTE. And I return?—What then are their
conditions?³⁸

SIMONE. Confession, and repentance, and your
fines,
The stigma of oblation, and a robe
Of penitence worn round the city.

DANTE. Humph!—
A fool's cap, too, like that which I am told
Was worn by Lippus Lapi Ciolo?³⁹
And what about my wife?—would like to watch
Her Dante decorate a scene like that?

SIMONE. She is Donati's niece.

DANTE.

If I return,

I come as husband of Donati's niece?

And follower of his family and faction?—

Present my compliments, bid all have patience.

Not far away, a place is waiting those

Who wish to damn a soul for doing right.

In which that sort of thing is done far better.

SIMONE. But——

DANTE. No; there is no but. God gives each
manOne life where kindle feeling, thought, and
will;—

And bids him hold it like a torch on high

To light himself and others. Do you claim

That he should lower it?

SIMONE.

Why, in form, perhaps,

And forms of different shape hold torches.

DANTE.

None

Can ever plunge the torch beneath earth's mire

And keep it burning. Yield in form you say?—

In form our frames but vehicle the truth.

Yet by its vehicle the world will rate it.

When comes the splendor of a monarch's
march

Men cheer his chariot, not his character.

Should I let mine trail, broken, bruised. be-
mired,

The world would hiss both car and occupant.

Enter—Right—ATTENDANT.

DANTE *pauses and bows to ATTENDANT.*

ATTENDANT. The Marquis comes. Perhaps you would receive him.

DANTE. Yes. (*to DELEGATES*). Pardon me.

Exit—Right—DANTE and ATTENDANT.

SIMONE. A game-cock crowing yet, eh?
But when they drive him from his present dunghill,

He scarce will clap his wings with such a whur.
No further need deceiving him, I take it!

None here will now oppose our seizing him.

(*pointing to the writing desk, toward which several DELEGATES move.*)

But first the desk, in it to find the list

Of Florence traitors, banded to uphold

The emperor. Come their owner back, provoke him,

And thus invoke the fiend in him to furnish

Excuses to offset the fiend in us.

Enter—Right—DANTE.

DANTE (*seeing the DELEGATES handling his papers*). What mean you?

SIMONE. We are gathering information.
A man so learned should encourage us.

DANTE. I thought that you were gentlemen from Florence.

SIMONE. Yes, dealing with 'a traitor from Verona.

DANTE. Put back those papers.

SIMONE. Yes, we shall, and use
Your body as a sack to pack them in.

DANTE (*drawing his sword*). It will be wet and
heavy when you do,
And fewer of you left to carry it.

(DELEGATES *draw swords*.)

*Enter—Right—the MARQUIS with ATTENDANTS
and CINO.*

MARQUIS. Wait!—What is this?—You think we
dwell in Florence?

Or fail to furnish guests with knives to carve
What leaves our larder?—You, forsooth, must
ply

Your own blades in each others' carcasses?

DANTE. They seized my papers, and would seize
my person.

MARQUIS (*to SIMONE and OTHERS*). Return
the papers, and return your persons
To your own city.

SIMONE. Pardon, we were told
This traitor would no longer be your guest.

MARQUIS. He is my guest, while here. I say farewell.

(*He bows to SIMONE and DELEGATES, toward whom some of the ATTENDANTS of the MARQUIS move.*)

Exeunt—Left—SIMONE and DELEGATES, followed by some of the ATTENDANTS.

DANTE (*to MARQUIS*). No guest should be a pest and peril to you.

MARQUIS. Nor I to him. Till you decide to leave us,

You shall not lack protection.

DANTE. After that,

My soul shall lack what more I need,—a friend

MARQUIS. I wish to speak to you of that—but later.

Exeunt—Right—MARQUIS and ATTENDANTS.

CINO (*to DANTE*). Where shall you go?

DANTE. Oh, high
up in the Alps,

Too high for anyone to follow me.

CINO. To be too high for that, you need no Alps.

DANTE. Your phrase is kindly meant, my Cino, yet

Conceive how barren, cold, and colorless

Is life upon the heights.

CINO. Conceive, as well,
How far, and broad, and varied, and sublime
Are earth and heaven when these are seen from
them.

Souls oft are driven from our lower life
That thus they may explore for us the higher.

DANTE. You mean that when a man is bound,
feet, limbs,
Trunk, head, he has no weapon left him save
His voice. How well that I keep yet these
papers!—

(gesturing toward his desk).

The slowest lines of thought are like the light-
ning's

In this,—they never track the same trail twice.
Had these been lost, they had been lost forever.

CINO. Your pardon, friend; nor deem it strange
in me

That, when we met, my spirit's agitation
So wrenched the links of memory that they
failed

To hold together that which chiefly joined
My journey hither and my thought of you.

*(taking the objects mentioned from his
pocket and presenting them to DANTE).*

This miniature, Giotto's Beatrice,
His work and gift.

DANTE (*taking it from CINO*).

Oh, Cino, thank you, thank you.

Thank him too for me.

CINO (*taking papers from his pocket*).

These were rescued too

By Dino Frescobaldi from your home

What time the mob made havoc of all else.³⁵

DANTE (*taking the papers*).

Why, Cino, do you know what you have done?

That day when, as you thought, my love appeared,

She bade me write of what I just had dreamt.

While fresh in mind I sketched it, hued by all

The glory of imagination's dawn.

'Tis here; nor since I lost it, head or heart

Has ventured to supply a substitute.

Yet void of it, the path of thought I trod

Seemed like a day's where comes no sun. But

now—

CINO. Can mount, and, though none follow, make
all hear

Your voice come crying from the wilderness.³⁶

You know, in ancient times, it was the poets,

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea,

Revealed the truth. The priests could but repeat it.

DANTE. And now ours need their repertoire renewed?

CINO. They do; nor doubt that poets can renew
it.

Though no new message may inspire them, insight

May often read through oldest form new
meaning.

DANTE. Ay, less the lack of truth makes mortals
fools

Than lack in thinking of the truth they have.

One thing, at least, my Cino, life has taught
me,—

That reason's God must be a God of reason.

If so, there lives no right but reason fashions;

Nor is there aught that should seem right to
man

That fits not reasons fashioned by himself.

So those who know they own an understand-
ing,

And know how all things earthly join to train
it,

Yet think of God as all misunderstood,

Must think with minds whose methods are the
devil's.

Pray heaven that we two join not in their error.

I oft have asked, my Cino, why it is

That all the world should hurl at one like me,

From state and church and home, what harms
my life

Well nigh beyond what slew the martyr
Stephen?—

Why must one live all buried save his voice?—

For nothing?—Nay; the paths of Providence

Were never plotted yet without some plan.

If God be one, his realm has unity;

And that quick blade of death, which cleaves
the reins

And splits the wheels with which we race
through life,

Is but a mystic wand beyond whose touch

A hidden life speeds on to reach the bar

Of everlasting justice.⁴⁰ Where that waits

What need to prove? one merely needs to show,

From what life now is, what life shall become.

So I would do; and warn men not to take

Mere earth and sky for that one priceless jewel,

The soul, that they encase. With gaze on it,

The men who keep their spirits clean and clear

From touch or taint of selfishness or vice,

May oft behold in depths of inner life

Which nearest lie to nature's inner life,

The image and the presence that reveal

The power and purposes that are divine.

Enter—Left—ATTENDANT.

(He bows to DANTE, who returns the bow.)

ATTENDANT (*gesturing toward CINO*).

A stranger here awaits the Senior.

Exit—Left—ATTENDANT.

CINO.

So?—

Then "Au revoir," my Dante. Do you know,
Your words recall what once our aged tutor,
Latini, taught us?

DANTE.

What was that?

CINO.

Why, this,—

A poet like a poem is a product.

*Exit—Left—after shaking hands with DANTE,
CINO.*

DANTE looks toward CINO, as he leaves;
then, taking from his pocket where he has
placed them, the miniature of Beatrice,
and also the papers brought him, and hold-
ing them in his hands, and gazing at them
fondly, he walks slowly toward the Cur-
tains at the rear. He disappears behind
them. A moment later, they separate, re-
vealing the Closing Tableau.

CLOSING TABLEAU.

*The Piazza di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy.
Backing is the Church of Santa Croce. In
front of it, on its Pedestal is the great Statue
of DANTE as it now stands. If thought best,
BEATRICE and OTHERS may be grouped below
it.*

CURTAIN.

END OF THE DRAMA.



NOTES UPON DANTE.

¹"When first the glorious lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes, even she who was called Beatrice, . . . she appeared to me at the beginning of her ninth year almost, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. Her dress on that day was of a most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girded and adorned in such a sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith. . . . In my boyhood I often went in search of her, and found her so noble and praiseworthy that certainly of her might have been said those words of the poet Homer, 'She seemed to me the daughter not of a mortal man but of God.'"—*Dante's La Vita Nuova*, pp. 23, 24, 26, from the translation, as are all other of the following quotations from the same, of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

²"To the Florentine poets of this new school belonged . . . Dino Frescobaldi. . . . But the greatest of them are Guido Cavalcanti, Cino de' Sinibuldi da Pistoja, and, in his youthful poems, Dante himself."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 132.

³"After the lapse of so many days that nine years exactly were completed since the above-written appearance of this most gracious being, on the last of those days, it happened that the same wonderful lady appeared to me dressed all in pure white between two gentle ladies. . . . She turned her eyes thither where I stood sorely abashed. . . . She saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness. The hour of her most sweet salutation was exactly the ninth of that day; and because it was the first time that any words from her reached mine ears, I came into such sweetness that I parted thence as one intoxicated."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 27.

⁴"Of the poems contained in the book (*La Vita Nuova*) the first, as Dante himself informs us, was composed in his eighteenth

year. . . . According to the custom of the time, he sent it to several poets, who answered it. Some of these answers are extant. Among them is a sonnet by Guido Cavalcanti."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, pp. 204, 205.

⁵"It is interesting to read in Dino's book, who equally belonged to the White party, by what reasons, according to his opinion, influential Florentines had been decided to follow either party. Guido Cavalcanti had done so 'because he was a personal enemy of Corso Donati.'"—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 172.

⁶"As I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did; also, I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 135.

⁷"What time she made ready to salute me, the spirit of love destroying all other perceptions, thrust forth the feeble spirits of mine eyes, saying, 'Do homage unto your mistress,' and, putting itself in their place to obey; so that he who would might then have beheld Love, beholding the lids of mine eyes shake. And when this most gentle lady gave her salutation, Love, . . . bred in me such an overpowering sweetness that my body, being all subjected thereto, remained many times helpless and passive."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 46, 47.

⁸"I was in a place whence mine eyes could behold their beatitude; and betwixt me and her, in a direct line, there sat another lady of a pleasant favor; who looked round at me many times, marveling at my continued gaze which seemed to have her for its object. And many perceived that she thus looked; so that, departing hence, I heard it whispered after me, 'Look you to what a pass such a lady hath brought him'; and in saying this they named her who had been midway between the most gentle Beatrice and mine eyes. Therefore I was reassured, and knew that, for that day, my secret had not been become manifest. Then immediately it came into my mind that I might make use of this lady

as a screen to the truth, and so well did I play my part that the most of those who had hitherto watched and wondered at me, now imagined they had found me out. By her means I kept my secret concealed so till some years were gone over; and, for my better security, I even made divers rhymes in her honor."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 33, 34.

⁹"He (Cavalcanti) was married for political reasons. . . . Rossetti sees a tendency in him to mingle 'the perversity of a logician' with 'his amorous poetry.'"—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, pp. 270, 282. . . . "His father, Cavalcanti, was a notorious sceptic and materialist. . . . Guido, too, passed for a sceptic."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 199.

¹⁰"Then, musing on what I had seen, I proposed to relate the same to many poets who were famous in that day; and, for that I had made myself in some sort the art of discoursing with rhyme, I resolved on making a sonnet. . . . I determined that I would make a grievous sonnet thereof the which I will write here, because it hath certain words in it whereof my lady was the immediate cause. These words I laid up with great gladness. . . . Wherefore having returned to the city I spake of, and considered thereof during certain days, I began a poem. . . . After I had recovered from my sickness, I be-thought me to write these things in rhyme; deeming it a lovely thing to be known. . . . And to the end that this inward strife which I had undergone might not be hidden from all saving the miserable wretch who endured it, I proposed to write a sonnet and to comprehend in it this horrible condition. . . . And because I would willingly have spoken to them, if it had not been for discreetness, I made in my rhymes as though I had spoken, and they had answered me. And thereof I wrote two sonnets; in the first of which I addressed them as I would fain have done; and in the second related their answer as though it had been spoken unto myself."—*From Dante's own accounts in the Vita Nuova of his method of accepting from his experiences suggestions for his poems*, pp. 29, 35, 95, 142, 87.

¹¹"To this sonnet I received many answers, conveying many different opinions; of the which one was sent by him whom I now call the first among my friends. . . . And indeed it was when

he learned that I was he who had sent those rhymes to him, that our friendship commenced" (The friend of whom Dante here speaks was Guido Cavalcanti—Rossetti).—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 31.

"The responsive sonnet breathes a spirit of encouragement and comfort; it is the elder poet taking the younger by the hand and bidding him be of good cheer."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, p. 283.

¹²Seeing that the epistle I speak of is in Latin, it belongeth not to mine undertaking; more especially as I know that my chief friend, for whom I write this book, wished also that the whole of it should be in the vulgar tongue."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 123, 124.

¹³"In the year 1289 Dante . . . took part in the battle of Campaldino where the Florentine Guelphs, 15,000 men strong, defeated the Ghibellines and the people of Arezzo . . . Dante served . . . at the siege of the castle of Caprona . . . in August of the same year."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, pp. 201, 202.

¹⁴"When I behold Bacchina in a rage
Just like a little lad I trembling stand
Whose master tells him to hold out his hand.—*Cecco Angiolieri*, another of Dante's literary friends who sings the praises of his rather shrewish lady-love, Bacchina."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, p. 197.

¹⁵"From that time forward, Love quite governed my soul. . . . I had nothing left for it but to do all his bidding continually . . . albeit her image . . . was yet of so perfect a quality that it never allowed me to be overruled by Love without the faithful counsel of reason whensoever such counsel was useful."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 25, 26.

¹⁶"Cosmo Donati was the leader of the Blacks—'a knight after the fashion of the Roman Catiline, but more cruel than he, of noble blood and handsome appearance, a perfect orator with the finest manners, acutest mind and the very worst disposition,' that

is Dino Compagni's description of him. The very beginning of his career was a violence done to law, for he liberated a criminal of noble birth with armed force. In the battle of Campaldino, it was he who decided the victory by a cavalry attack which he had been forbidden, under penalty of death, to make."—*Federn's Dante and His Times*, pp. 171, 172.

¹⁷"In the year 1289, the one preceding the death of Beatrice, Dante served with the foremost cavalry in the great battle of Campaldino, . . . when the Florentines defeated the people of Arezzo."—*Introduction to Dante's Vita Nuova*, by D. Rossetti.

¹⁸"It came into my mind that I might make use of this lady as a screen to the truth; and so well did I play my part that those who had hitherto watched and wondered at me, now imagined they had found me out. . . . I made her my surety in such sort that the matter was spoken of by many in terms scarcely courteous; through the which I had oftenwhiles many troublesome hours. And by this it happened (to wit, by this false and evil rumor which seemed to misfame me of vice) that she who was the destroyer of all evil and the queen of all good, coming where I was, denied me her most sweet salutation, in the which alone was my blessedness."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 33, 45.

¹⁹"In her salutation alone was there any beatitude for me. . . . When, for the first time, this beatitude was denied me, I became possessed with such grief that, parting myself from others, I went into a lonely place to bathe the ground with most bitter tears."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 47.

²⁰"This excellent lady came into such favor with all men that not only she herself was honored and commended, but through her companionship honor and commendation came unto others. . . . When she drew near unto any, so much truth and simplicity entered into his heart . . . she showed herself so gentle and so full of all perfection, that she bred in those who looked upon her a soothing quiet beyond any speech."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 115, 112, 113.

²¹"I, as was my friend's pleasure, resolved to stand with him and do honor to those ladies. But as soon as I had thus resolved, I began to feel a faintness and a throbbing at my left

side, which soon took possession of my whole body. Whereupon . . . being fearful lest my trembling should be discerned of them, I lifted mine eyes to look on those ladies, and then first perceived among them the excellent Beatrice. And when I perceived her, all my senses were overpowered by the great lordship that love obtained, finding himself so near . . . until nothing but the spirits of sight remained in me; and even these remained driven out of their own instruments."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 59.

²²"I received the visit of a friend whom I counted as second unto me in the degrees of friendship (Cino) and who, moreover, had been united by the nearest kindred to that most gracious creature. And when we had a little spoken together, he began to solicit me that I should write somewhat in memory of a lady who had died; and he disguised his speech so as to seem to be speaking of another who was but lately dead; wherefore, I, perceiving that his speech was of none other than that blessed one herself, told him that it should be done as he required."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 130.

²³"After this most gracious creature had gone out from among us, the whole city came to be, as it were, widowed and despoiled of all its dignity."—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 123.

²⁴"Then having sat for some space sorely in thought because of the time that was now past, I was so filled with dolorous imaginings that it became outwardly manifest in mine altered countenance. Whereupon feeling this, and being in dread lest any should have seen me, I lifted mine eyes to look; and then perceived a young and very beautiful lady. . . . It happened after this that, whenever I was seen of this lady, she became pale and of a piteous countenance, as though it had been with love; whereby she remembered me many times of my own most noble lady who was wont to be of a like paleness."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 138, 140.

²⁵"At length, by the constant sight of this lady, mine eyes began to be gladdened overmuch with her company, through which many times I had unrest and rebuked myself as a base person; also many times I cursed the unsteadfastness of mine eyes."—*La Vita Nuova*, pp. 141, 142.

²⁶"The Pope by secret understanding with the Blacks sent the French prince, Charles of Valois, as 'pacificator' to Florence. 'He came with the lance of Judas,' Dante says."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 245.

²⁷"Dante was no longer a religious pilgrim but a political ambassador. 'Why are you Florentines so obstinate?' said the Pope. . . . 'Go back, two of you,' he said, 'and they shall have my benediction if they procure that my will be obeyed.' . . . Two to go, and one to stay. . . . Which of the three shall it be? Boniface had seen Dante face to face; here was the man who might thwart him. Better to keep this one in honorable imprisonment till the thing should be over and done. Was it not during these months when he was forced into unsympathetic intimacy with the inner life of St. Peter's . . . that he acquired that fine scorn of the venal and simoniacal Roman Curia which made him declare, in after years, that during this very year of Jubilee his exile was being planned in the place where all day long they make merchandise of Christ."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, pp. 32, 33.

²⁸"Dante's own estimate of Cino is clear from the abundant references in the *Eloquentia* where Dante habitually speaks of himself as 'Cino's friend.' . . . The first and strongest bond of sympathy was that sympathy of mind and taste."—*Dante and His Italy*; *Ragg*, pp. 286, 287.

²⁹"Witch craft and necromancy were normal factors in daily life."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, p. 144. "Divination and necromancy were largely resorted to in moments of crisis."—*Idem.*, p. 143. "So great a hold had these mission preachers on the popular imagination, that a very general belief was entertained in their miraculous powers, and some of them had the reputation of being able even to raise the dead."—*Idem*, pp. 97, 98. "The Florentines whose reputation for wit was . . . great . . . on hearing that the Dominican John of Vicenza contemplated a visit to Florence . . . cried out in mock alarm: 'For heaven's sake don't let him come here. For we have heard that he raises the dead, and we are already so many that our city will scarcely hold us.' "—*Idem.*, p. 200.

³⁰⁴"After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision, wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labor all I can, as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be his pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After which may it seem good unto him who is the Master of Grace that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady; to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on his countenance *qui est omnia sæcula benedictus. Laus Deo.*"—*The concluding paragraph of La Vita Nuova*, p. 159. "As he explains it, the heavenly powers by mediation of loving and friendly spirits had so decreed it that his soul should be shown the way through the metaphysical realms where he could see the terrible retribution of God's justice and be satisfied."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 269. From the accounts given, we must infer that Dante supposed himself to have had an external vision of Beatrice, clearly separated from that which might be experienced in a mere dream; and that this vision made "through the mediation of loving and friendly spirits," was of such a character as to cause him to spend most of the rest of his life developing from his own imagination the general conception of justice underlying his great poem. The scene in Act Fourth of this drama represents a very common, if not the most common, way in which, in all ages, men have been led to suppose themselves to have had an external vision of one dead; as well as the most common way in which, having had it, the vision has induced them to develop the general thought which, at the time of having it, has controlled them. The fact that Dante, so frank with reference to every other experience related in *La Vita Nuova*, never explained the circumstances or character of this vision, is in exact accord with what we should expect from a wise man conscious of the possibilities of delusion and deception connected with an experience such as is depicted in the drama. He would not have risked the danger of being thought a consulter of sorcerers, many of whom in those times were disreputable violators of the law, or of being thought a dupe of a monk of the church, following their practices in a supposed more legitimate way. At the same time, in the circumstances, notwithstanding much that could not abso-

lutely convince himself, much less others, it is perfectly conceivable that the poet's sympathetic and imaginative nature should have been so profoundly influenced by the possibilities suggested by what he had experienced that this should have had a formative effect upon his whole career.—*The Author*.

³¹"The sight of this lady brought me into so unwonted a condition that I often thought of her as one too dear to me; and I began to consider her thus. . . . Perhaps it was Love himself who set her in my path, so that my life might find peace. And there were times when I thought yet more fondly, until my heart consented unto its reasoning. But, when it had so consented, my thought would often turn round upon me as moved by reason and cause me to say within myself, 'What hope is this which would console me after so base a fashion?'"—*La Vita Nuova*, p. 144. "Boccaccio tells us that Dante was married to Gemma Donati about a year after the death of Beatrice. Can Gemma then be the 'lady' . . . his love for whom Dante so condemns?"—*Rossetti's Note on the preceding passage*.

³²"At the burial of a lady of the Frescobaldi family, a man's movements that had been misunderstood, had caused bloodshed. . . . In the year 1300, while Dante was one of the Priors, they made an attempt to insure peace by banishing the most unruly chiefs of both parties. Among the exiled blacks was Corso Donati, while Dante, with his severe sense of justice, had suffered his friend Cavalcanti to be confined at Sarzana, where he fell ill from the unhealthy climate, and died . . . two months later."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 240. "'This unhappy Priorate,' he once said, 'was the cause of all my misfortune.'"—*Idem.*, p. 240.

³³"Dante at this time contracted such enormous debts that many years later the family saw itself constrained to sell estates to pay them."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 239.

³⁴"The decree against Dante which to this day may be read in the so-called Libro del Chiode in the archive of Florence. . . . Dante and four others are condemned for peculation, fraud, extortion, bribery, and rebellion against the Pope and Charles . . . as proof, public fame is alleged. . . . Having failed

to appear in court, all the accused in it were declared outlaws and exiles in perpetuity, and if ever one of them should be caught on Florence soil he should be burned alive."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, pp. 246, 247.

²⁵"Then there is Dino Frescobaldi, 'famous rhymers of Florence,' through whom, if Boccaccio is to be trusted, Dante received back in exile the original draft of the first seven cantos of the *Inferno*."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, p. 273. "They had been left behind, with everything else, in Florence . . . hurriedly concealed . . . when he was exiled. . . . And with the manuscript, says Boccaccio, came a fervent letter to the Marquis . . . urging him to persuade Dante to continue so great a work. And so, at the urgent plea of his host Dante was induced to proceed. . . . And for this good advice of the Malaspina Dante was so grateful, says Benvenuto, that he could never say anything good enough of the family."—*Idem.*, pp. 332, 333.

³⁰"Cino . . . was exiled . . . five years after Dante had been cast out of Florence, in 1307, the memorable year of the advent of Henry VII. . . . One of Cino's poems deserves the lasting approbation of posterity, for in it he urges Dante to continue his great poem and so redeem the pledge given at the end of the *Vita Nuova*."—*Ragg's Dante and His Italy*, pp. 286, 287.

²⁷"In the year 1310, Henry of Luxemburg came to Italy. By no one was he saluted with such exultation as by Dante. He wrote letters full of wild and triumphant joy to Rome and Florence and to all princes of Italy. He had an audience with the Emperor; and in his letters he calls him the 'new Moses' and 'the Lamb of God.' He was full of the most ardent hopes . . . but the enterprise failed, and the Emperor died at Buonconvento on August 24, 1312. . . . What Dante felt at this blow he never expressed. Now all was over, all hope gone forever. . . . Again he wandered a banished fugitive on unknown ways."—*Federn's Dante and His Time*, p. 262.

²³"This then has been signified to me through the letters . . . of several friends that if I were willing to pay a certain sum of money and submit to the stigma of being offered up as

a sin-offering, I might be pardoned and return at once. . . . Far from a man . . . be the reckless humility of a heart of dirt that would allow him like a certain Cioli . . . to make an offering of himself, as if he were a caitiff. . . . If any other way can be discerned which does not touch the fame of Dante and his honor, that I will accept with alacrity. But if by no such way, Florence is to be entered, then Florence I shall never enter."—*Letter of Dante tr. on page 127 of A Handbook to Dante by Thomas Davidson.*

²³"Some suppose the individual in question to be a certain Lippo Lapi Cioli, who among others is said to have been allowed to return to Florence in 1316 on condition that he should walk behind the Carroccio with a fool's cap on his head, etc."—*Dictionary of Proper Names, etc., in the Works of Dante by Paget Trynbee.*

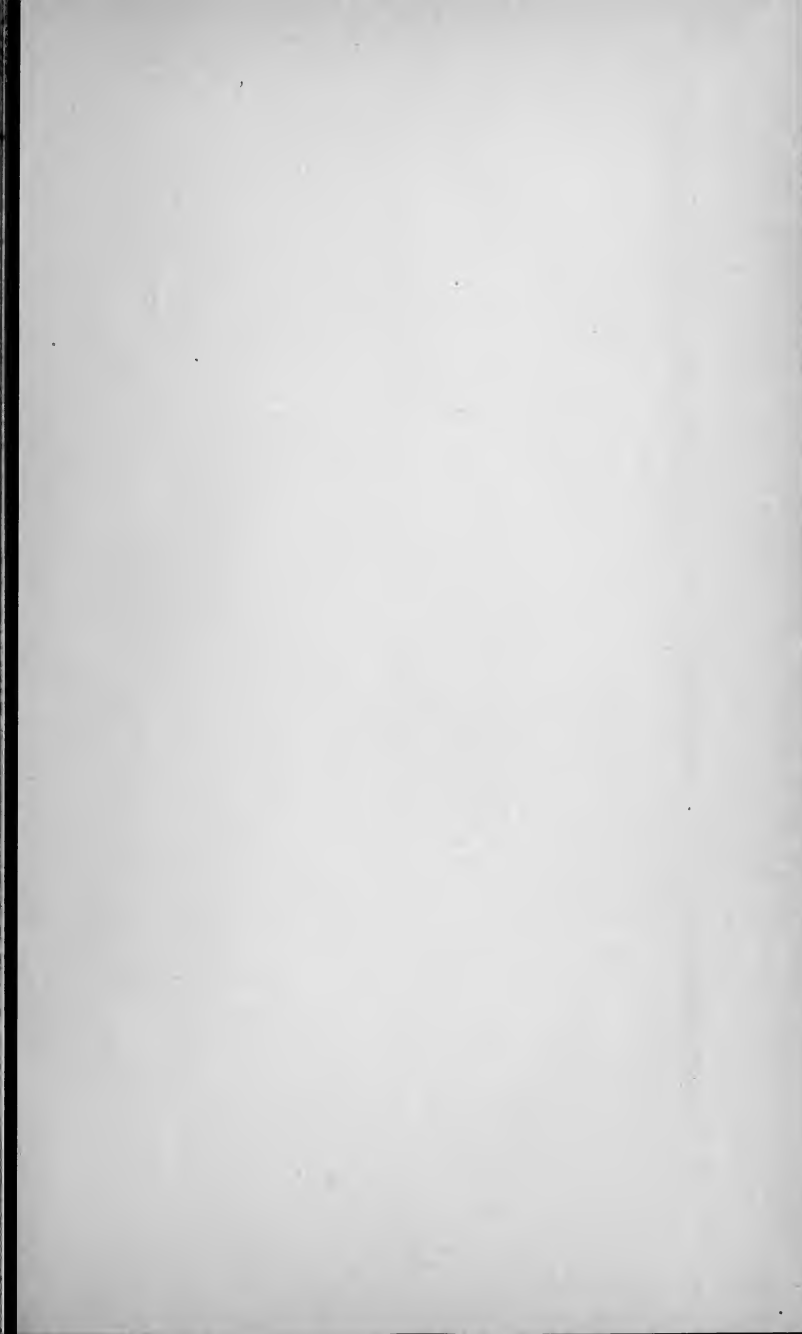
⁴⁰"Already at the time when Beatrice had been lost to him, and his thoughts followed her into the other world, his mind was deeply and intensely occupied with the Invisible, and his imagination attracted by its glories and hidden terrors . . . His eye pierced through the boundaries of time and space into the surrounding sphere of eternity; the wrongs done here were repaired and punished there. To see this, it had become necessary or, as he explains it, the heavenly power by mediation of loving and friendly spirits had so decreed it that his soul should be shown the way, through the metaphysical realms where he could see the terrible retribution of God's justice and be satisfied. . . . The state of horrible crime on earth was not all—the last word was not spoken here—he could be calmer and endure all knowing what was to follow."—*Federn's Dante and His Time, pp. 268, 269.*

DANTE

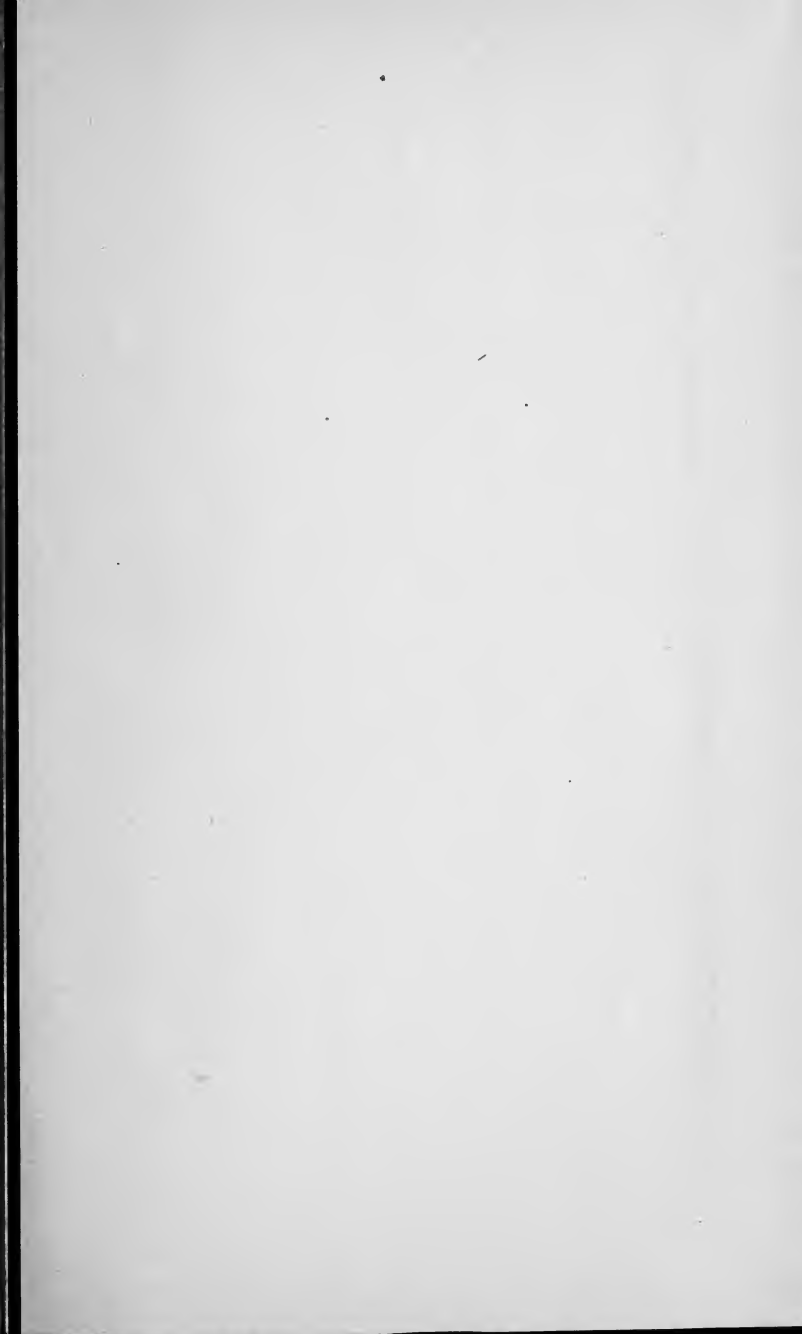
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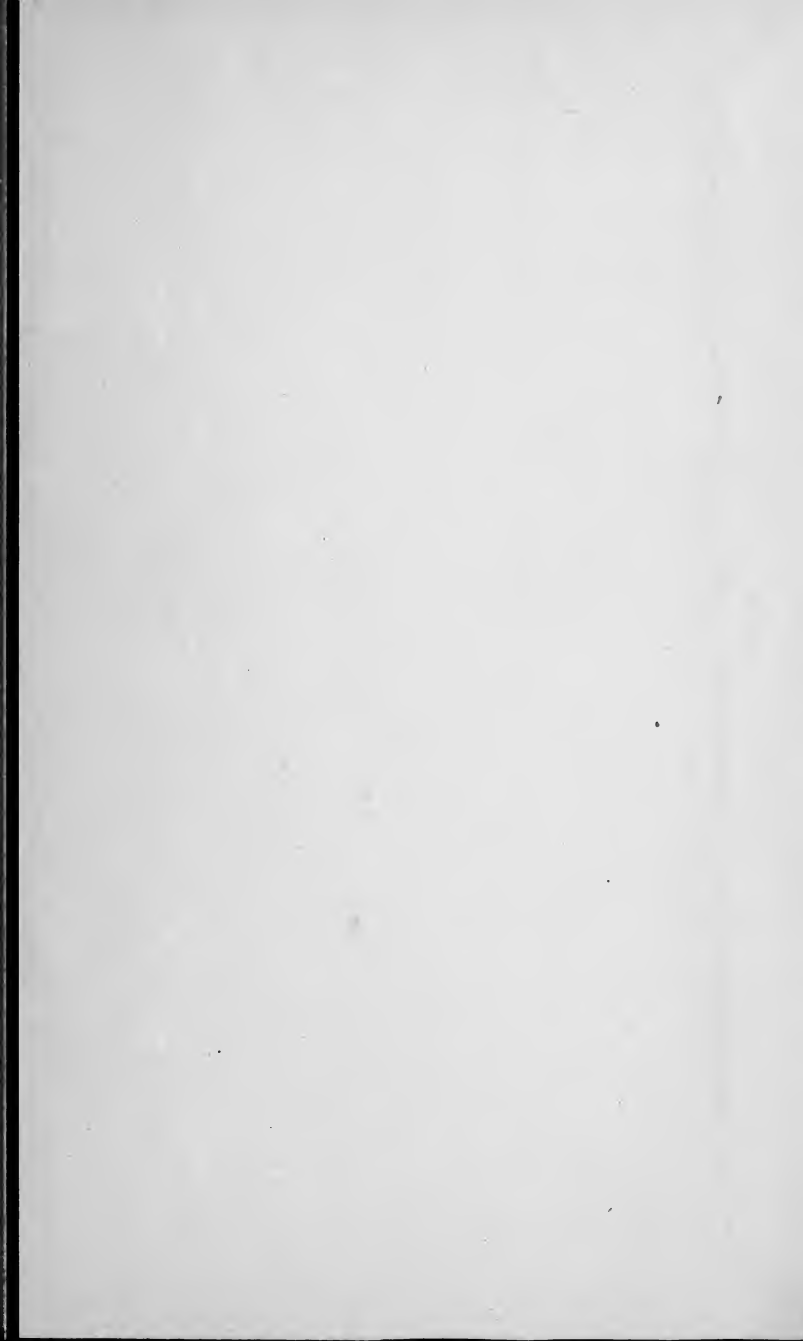
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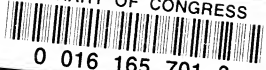








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